DUMITRU STANILOAE

THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD

ORTHODOX DOGMATIC THEOLOGY

VOLUME 5

THE SANCTIFYING MYSTERIES

THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD

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BY DUMITRU STANILOAE

VOLUME 1. REVELATION AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRIUNE GOD

VOLUME 2. THE WORLD: CREATION AND DEIFICATION

VOLUME 3. THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST AS GOD AND SAVIOR

VOLUME 4. THE CHURCH: COMMUNION IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

VOLUME 5. THE SANCTIFYING MYSTERIES

VOLUME 6. THE FULFILLMENT OF CREATION

Dumitru Staniloae

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Orthodox Dogmatic Theology
Volume 5
THE SANCTIFYING MYSTERIES

Translated and Edited by
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and
Robert Barringer

Foreword by
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CONTENTS

Foreword ix
Alkiviadis C. Calivas

1. Christ's Saving Mysteries: Creation Unified and Made New in the Church 1
  A. The Sacraments and Creation 1
  B. The Christological and Ecclesiological Basis of the Mysteries 4
    i. Visible and Invisible Operations: The Body, Soul, and Grace of Christ 8
    ii. Christ, the Unseen Celebrant of the Mysteries 11
    iii. The Christological and Ecclesial Character of the Mysteries 13
    iv. The Priest as Visible Celebrant of the Mysteries 19
2. Baptism: The Mystery of Rebirth through Water and the Spirit 27
  A. The Unity between Water and the Holy Spirit as Womb of the New Man 27
  B. The Multiple Efficacy of the Act of Baptism and of the Priest's Declaration 31
    i. Baptism as the Death of the Old Man and as Rebirth 32
    ii. Baptism as the Power of Continuous Spiritual Growth 37
    iii. Baptism as the Restoration of Christ's Image in Man 40
    iv. Baptism as the Gate of Entrance into the Church 47
  C. The Absolute Necessity of Baptism for Salvation 51

3. Chrismation: "The Seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit" 57
A. The Link between Baptism and Chrismation 57
B. The Special Activity of the Holy Spirit in the Mystery of Chrismation 60
C. The Meaning of the Visible Act of Chrismation 65
4. The Divine Eucharist: The Mystery of the Lord's Body and Blood 73
A. The Relationship between the Three Mysteries of Initiation 73
B. The Real Presence of the Lord's Body and Blood in the Eucharist 83
C. The Presence of the Lord's Body and Blood in the Eucharist and the Transformation of the Bread and Wine 90
D. The Eucharist as Sacrifice and Mystery 94
E. The Priest as Celebrant of the Eucharist 105
5. Repentance: The Mystery of Forgiveness 113
A. The Institution of the Mystery and Its Practice from the Beginning of the Church 114
B. The Constitutive Elements or Stages of the Mystery 118
i. The Confession of Sins and Its Spiritual Value 119
ii. The Epitimia (Penances) Recommended by the Priest 125
iii. The Absolution Given by the Priest to the Penitent 131
6. Ordination: Priesthood as the Living Image of Christ 135
A. The Distinction between Ordination and the Other Mysteries 135
B. The Invisible Priesthood of Christ, Source of the Visible Priesthood of the Church 138
C. Priesthood and the Unity of the Church 140
D. The Institution of the Priesthood; The Three Ranks of Priesthood from the Beginning of the Church 144
E. The Spiritual Character of the Christian Liturgical Priesthood and the Priesthood of the Faithful 148
F. Apostolic Succession 153
G. The Visible Aspects of Ordination and the Invisible Power It Bestows 158
7. Marriage: The Mystery of Human Love Crowned in Glory and Honor 167
A. The Place of Marriage among the Other Mysteries 167
B. Marriage as a Natural, Lifelong Bond between a Man and a Woman 170
C. The Strengthening and Ennobling of Marriage by Christ 173

D. The Mystery's Constitutive Aspects and Their Significance for the Spiritual Power Bestowed by the Mystery 184

8. Holy Unction: The Mystery of Divine Healing 193

A. Definition and Main Purpose 193

B. Secondary Purpose 195

Abbreviations 201

Notes 203

FOREWORD

Fr. Dumitru Staniloae—priest, theologian, academician, and professor—was one of the preeminent Orthodox theologians of the twentieth century. His theological treatises and persuasive presentations in lecture halls and churches in the areas of dogmatic and ascetical theology contributed greatly to the spiritual renewal of Orthodox life and the reinvigoration of the theological enterprise in Romania and beyond. Admired for his theological acumen, he was especially respected for his deep faith and genuine piety. A modern-day confessor of the Church, he suffered humiliations and imprisonment at the hands of the overlords of his beloved homeland during the long, dark period of the Communist dictatorship following World War II. Thus the deepness of his spiritual life and the brilliance of his theological word are all the more striking inasmuch as they were shaped, forged, tested, and defended under fire.

Fr. Staniloae's comprehensive three-volume work *Teologia dogmatică ortodoxă* [Orthodox dogmatic theology], published in 1978, has been translated into English as the six-volume series *The Experience of God: Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*. Through this series the English-speaking world has been introduced to Fr. Staniloae's dynamic and liberating approach to doing theology. The freshness and dynamism of his thought, rooted deeply in the biblical, patristic, and liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church, is discernible in all his works—and especially in the present volume, *The Sanctifying Mysteries*, which contains his theological reflections on the seven mysteries or sacraments of the Church: baptism, chrismation, the Divine Eucharist, repentance, priesthood, marriage, and holy unction.

The sacraments are founded on the words and actions of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. They perpetuate His redemptive activity in the world and communicate His saving grace through the sacred rites of the Church. Or, as Fr. Staniloae puts it, "Christ Himself . . . has instituted [the mysteries] because He practiced them from the beginning and continues to be their invisible celebrant . . . Christ Himself extends and develops the life of the Church by means of all the sacraments. It is only visibly that these are celebrated by the priest as the representative of the Church [and of Christ]; invisibly, Christ Himself is their celebrant."

The Church is the milieu in which we experience and take hold of the salvation wrought by Christ through His holy life, unique teachings, extraordinary works, awesome death, life-giving Resurrection, and glorious Ascension. The Church as the place of our deification is disclosed essentially through the sanctifying mysteries, each of which embodies a particular gift and grants the recipient the potential to realize it in its fullness. However, as Fr. Staniloae notes, "the gift is also a duty." The gift must not only be preserved; its powers must also be developed and cultivated by the recipient's own diligence and attentiveness in the knowledge that the gift is not "static in character, but is something filled with endless possibilities."

Every sacrament is intensely personal, a unique and decisive event in the life of the one who receives it. But it is also intensely communal, because the sacraments belong to the Church. Their power emanates from within the Church. The realities which the holy mysteries impart remain active and are perfected only when they are interiorized and when the recipient becomes firmly set in what is good and holy in the unity of the Church, given that salvation comes through a community, the Church. As Fr. Staniloae puts it, "A person cannot develop as a person except within the community of the Church, benefitting from her help and working for her sake . . . Human beings cannot work effectively if they lack a milieu in which to work, one that stimulates and helps them to this end, because each one makes use of the work of each of the others."

The sacraments are the most important manifestation of the life of grace inherent in the Church. Through the holy mysteries the faithful encounter the Triune God, enter into communion with Him, and engage His transformative and empowering love, full of healing and reconciliation. Indeed, the entire theological, ethical, canonical, and liturgical tradition of the Church is, at its core, essentially therapeutic in nature in the sense that Christ's saving work—culminating in His death, Resurrection, and Ascension—has released creation from the bonds of corruption and has healed human nature of the wounds of the Fall. We share in the fruits of Christ's redemptive work through the holy mysteries, entering thereby into the eschatological realities of wholeness, goodness, holiness, perfect love, incorruptibility, and immortality.

In the present age the sacred mysteries manifest the realities of the eschaton, of the age to come. Christ has given the holy sacraments to the Church as visible signs of His invisible grace—as signs and pledges that constitute a passage into the eschatological order, raising the recipient to a new and higher state of life. The grace we encounter and receive in the sacraments, according to Fr. Staniloae, is nothing other than "the uncreated energy, or activity, of Christ. Through each sacrament He relives and instills in each believer the experience and power of certain exalted states by which He has raised up His human nature to its full height and deification." Through the sacraments and especially the Eucharist, "we experience the states, feelings, and activities of Christ, and He experiences ours, penetrated and characterized by His own . . . Ultimately, the full union between Christ and ourselves, realized through the Eucharist, is the testimony of His supreme love for us, and this is the basis of the mutual communication perfected between Him and us."

The sacred and sanctifying mysteries confer their transformative power upon every believer through the operation of the Holy Spirit. He makes Christ present to the Church in fulfillment of His promise that "where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matt 18:20). Christ celebrates the sacraments invisibly, performing them through visible organs and acts, that is, through priests and bishops, through material elements, and through the prayers, gestures, and declarations that make up the sacred rites of the Church. In Fr. Staniloae's words, "Christ, become invisible to us through His Ascension, now makes use of a visible, personal instrument to exercise His activity upon those who are to be united with Him and who are to grow in Him by entering into the Church and pursuing their spiritual development within her . . . As a Person, Christ exercises His activity upon human persons in the most effective manner through the instrumentality of other human persons."

This wonderfully written and carefully translated book, *The Sanctifying Mysteries*, is especially important for English speakers, because it constitutes the first comprehensive treatment in the English language of the holy mysteries from an Orthodox doctrinal perspective. The book will doubtlessly prove to be a valuable resource for all people of faith, Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike, who wish to deepen their understanding and appreciation of the holy mysteries. The book will be especially useful to clergy in the exercise of their teaching ministry and to Orthodox theologians engaged in ecumenical dialogues and consultations, inasmuch as Fr. Staniloae draws clear distinctions between the Orthodox understanding and the Roman Catholic and Protestant approach to the sacred mysteries. In addition, his lucid explanations of the sacred mysteries, free of abstruseness, are not only informative and edifying but also inspirational and motivational, which makes this book a valuable aid for students of theology, for catechists, and for other informed laypeople.

By highlighting the essential role of the sacred mysteries in the life of the Church and in the life of her individual members, Fr. Staniloae stirs the heart and mind of his readers, helping them discern the awesome truth that through the sacraments Christ becomes everyone's contemporary. Through them Christ touches, purifies, illumines, redeems, sanctifies, and deifies every person who comes to Him in faith. Hence Fr. Staniloae counsels that participation in the sacraments demands not only faith but also effort if their powers are to be perfected and their recipients to undergo a real transformation into the image of Christ.

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CHAPTER 1

CHRIST'S SAVING MYSTERIES: CREATION UNIFIED AND MADE NEW IN THE CHURCH

A. The Sacraments and Creation

It is not the view of the Orthodox Church that redemption reaches its fulfillment in the death of Christ on the cross, as if this death made up in some juridical way for the offense offered to God by the human race, but rather that redemption is fulfilled in the union of the crucified and risen Christ with those who believe in Him so that they may be able to die to sin and be raised to new life. Consistent with this, the Orthodox Church accords to the mysteries, the sacraments,[1] a place of great importance in the economy of the redemption as the very means through which this union of human beings with Christ is brought about. Here Orthodoxy distinguishes itself from Protestantism, where the word *about* Christ almost seems to be enough, a word that enables man to commit himself to the belief that Christ, through His death, has effected our redemption; and that through this belief, human beings may benefit personally from the redemption won by Christ. Protestant tradition has also inherited from Catholicism a lack of belief in the power of a union of Christ with mankind and hence also in the importance of the mysteries, for the Catholic tradition sees in the sacraments only the visible means whereby an equivalent of the merit won by Christ through His death is bestowed in the form of a created grace that is to be guarded and administered by the Church.

At the basis of the Orthodox Church's concept of the mysteries, there stands a trust in the power of Christ's divine Spirit to work through one man upon another, through the mediation of their bodies and of the material elements shared between them, all within the milieu of the Church as the mystical body of Christ. The Church trusts that the divine Spirit can operate through the medium of the human spirit on the matter of the cosmos in general, and also upon other persons. Spiritual powers flow out through the touch of the human hand upon others either directly through the body or through other material realities, for the human body is made up of senses, in which spirit and body are not divided from one another. The one who transmits this power that flows out through the hand is the subject who thinks and wills, that is, a subject with a spiritual basis. Moreover, the power that flows out through the body of someone who acts upon someone else reaches to the spirit of this other subject. The two, while meeting one another by means of the senses, encounter one another through the spirit. This power that a human being transmits through his body is, however, more than just a power belonging to his own body and spirit; there is also a much greater power that passes out through these: the power of the Spirit of God, with whom a man brings himself into concord and to whom he opens himself through faith within the milieu of the Church. Within a sacrament, no line can be drawn that divides the movement of the acting human being from the power of the Spirit of God, for inasmuch as the one who celebrates the mystery is, as priest, the representative of the Church, the Holy Spirit works through him, the Spirit whose breath is blowing throughout the entire milieu of the Church, understood as the mystical body in which Christ is at work. This, properly speaking, is the decisive fact. For the one who receives a sacrament opens himself through his faith to the full action of the power of God transmitted by the one who celebrates it within the faith milieu of the Church, the field of action of the Spirit of Christ.

Hence the mystery is celebrated in the encounter of two human subjects who through faith have opened themselves to the Holy Spirit, who is at work within the milieu of the Church, and this encounter is extended also in the direct touch of their bodies, or through the mediation of some material element. It is not the material elements, the words spoken, or the gestures realized, taken in themselves, that constitute the mystery. Rather, the mystery has its being in the faith-filled encounter of the two persons within the midst of the Church, which is full of the Holy Spirit, and also in the bodily contact between the two persons, together with the testimony to their faith that they give through their words, both the faith of the one who celebrates the mystery and of the one who receives it.

The general basis of the mysteries of the Church is the faith that God can operate upon the creature in his visible reality. In this sense the general meaning of the mysteries is the union of God with the creature, and the most comprehensive mystery is the union of God with the whole of creation. This is a mystery that contains everything, and there is absolutely no part of reality not contained within it.[2] This union begins with the very act of creation and is destined to find its fulfillment through the movement of creation toward that state in which "God is all in all" (1 Cor 15:28).[3] Is there anyone who can explain the meaning and the depth of this union, the way in which the Word of God is present within the reasons[4] of created things and the way He is at work, sustaining and governing them toward their goal of complete union with Him?[5]

Within this all-encompassing mystery, each component has the character of mystery, for it is bound up with all the other components, and all of these together with God. Not a single one is confused with the others, but each is maintained in connection with all the rest by the divine Logos. In this great mystery the human being holds a place apart. He is the image and principal organ of that great and dynamic mystery that is the union of the Logos with the whole of creation, and this because his very being is the union of spirit with matter, and thus he unites the whole of creation in himself and creation with God. The human spirit transfigures the matter with which it has been united from the beginning, integrating it into a body, as the environment in which the spirit works. In the mystery of the human being, all his parts and functions are themselves mysteries as participants in the mystery that he constitutes as an integral whole.

The material eye that sees is a mystery, as is the word that a man speaks, being a combination of sound and sense, the filling of sound with sense. Also a mystery is the face of the human being, matter illuminated by thought and feeling. Man possesses in himself the elements of the entire creation, but in a special way he also unites within himself the whole of creation, for human consciousness tends toward the comprehension of all creation, and through the human eye, extended by technology, greater and greater distances can be spanned. If reason shines forth from within the human mind, in some fashion wherever it extends itself, there extends something of the energy of the very material of the brain. The human being is the bond of creation, the true "macrocosm"—in the language of St. Maximus the Confessor—because he is the conscious head of the rational and unitary fabric of the world. But man has this quality because he never comes to a stop, even at the limits of the created world; through his thought and his yearning, he goes beyond them, participating in God Himself and opening himself to God's infinite light. Only in this way does the human being project into the world and upon the world a light beyond it, a never-ending light. Only thus does he deepen in an endless way the meaning of the world, or its wealth of meanings. More than any other single entity in this world, the human being realizes the paradoxical character of the mystery; he unites within himself the spirit (conscious reason) with matter (unconscious and malleable rationality), simplicity with composition, subjectivity with objectivity, the defined with the undefined, even the created with the uncreated.

Hence the human being is created in order that, on behalf of creation, he may bring a decisive contribution to the maintenance and fulfillment of the all-encompassing mystery that is the union of God with creation, and that he may be the conscious and willing means through which God maintains and fulfills this union. Accordingly, the human being is brought forward as the last among the creatures, as a kind of natural bond or link (*syndesmos*) between the extremities of the whole, through its own members, and as one who within himself brings into unity the things that had been separated, according to nature, by great distances. The human being begins from his own state of separation and—through that union which brings all things together in God, their cause—advances step by step in his sublime ascent so that all things might reach their goal, with man uniting them in God, in whom there is no separation.[6]

B. The Christological and Ecclesiological Basis of the Mysteries

Even at the outset of creation, God works through the cosmos, and human beings work through the cosmos in a similar way, uniting their work to that of God, sometimes more closely and at other times less closely. Through man, the activity that God exercises upon creation is cast into special relief in view of its transfiguration and pneumatization (spiritualization). This is the natural basis of the mysteries of the Church, the basis for the fact that, for example, one man can transmit to another the power of God through the medium of water. The Man who has become, however, the medium *par excellence* whereby God exercises power over matter and over other human beings is Christ. It is from Christ that in each of the sacraments, the power of God extends over all human beings through gestures and material elements.

Through his own will and through the connection that he has with all other created things, man has been capable of producing separation and alienation among all things; he has likewise produced division between all things and God, their ultimate and unifying principle. For by separating himself from any other human being, he has separated himself from the way in which the latter sees the whole of reality, and also from benefitting from that reality in a brotherly way. Thus each person has raised up the whole of reality as a barrier over against the other, or, through their feuds and struggles, the two have divided it up between themselves, seeking always to keep reality in a state of separation by such means. Human beings have in this way also experienced a division among themselves, and no longer does any single one among them live in harmony with the whole of reality as it truly is.

Because human beings had brought things to such a point, the Word of God—the unitary, personal bosom and source of all the "reasons" of the world—proceeded to bring about a new union of all things in Himself, a union that would be closer and more secure. With this in mind, the Word continued to make use of human nature, precisely for its capacity to be a means of bringing about the unity of all created things among themselves and between themselves and God. Accordingly, in order to effect this closer union, the Word Himself became man; He placed in the midst of human beings a center from among themselves that could no longer be separated from God and that no longer was inclined to seek separation from other human beings or to cause division within creation.

In this fashion *a new mystery comes into being, that of an even closer union between Creator and creature.* This is the mystery of Christ. The paradox of union between the uncreated and the created that was brought into being through creation appears now in an even sharper way, cast into the highest possible relief. God Himself is also man. The Creator is also creature; the depth of incomprehensibility and the subject who made all things becomes a human reason with the consciousness of its own limitation and with a perceptible body; the infinite makes itself finite, filling the latter with what belongs to the former. Thus the infinite horizon of the knowledge belonging to the supreme reality becomes completely transparent for human beings.

But the Word of God assumed our human nature as a human nature that was made personal in Himself, so that by means of it He might unite Himself more closely with all the human subjects who bear that same nature and with the whole of creation, a creation with which these same subjects are all connected through their natures.

The Word has thus made actual the full human potentiality for being that link which binds together God and creation; He has made of man, who is His image, the most adequate means for the exercise of that unifying power that the Logos holds over creation. His divine properties, permeated with love, find in the human virtues and in man's capacity to love both God and his neighbor the most efficacious form by which human beings can be united with God and with one another. Through the human spirit the Word of God is able to exercise His activity not only of spiritualizing, but also of deifying, the senses of the body. By the very fact that it was not a human hypostasis with which He united Himself, but that He made Himself the hypostasis of human nature, accompanied by His divine openness toward the whole of created reality and by His supreme capacity for human communion, the Word has made the humanity that He assumed the means of union and deification for all humankind and for all of creation in God.

The actualization of this unity between the Word and human subjects, a unity that remains to some extent only potential, takes the form of the Church. The Church is thus *the third mystery*, in which God the Word restores and raises to an even higher degree His union with the world, a world brought into being through the act of creation but weakened through human sin. Creation itself can be said to be a Church,[7] for the Church is creation restored and on the way toward renewal and fulfillment. If any mystery is the unity between opposites, then the Church is the ultimate mystery, for she is the form of the supreme unity of God with all created things. In the fullness of her development in the life to come, the Church will be the mode in which God is "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28). Thus the notions of mystery and of Church coincide. The universe, become once again Church, has become the all-encompassing mystery, for mystery is the presence and the action of God in the whole of creation. Moreover, inasmuch as each element within this all-encompassing mystery is also a mystery, it can also be said that each of its components is a church.[8]

The mystery of the Church in the strict sense, as the third mystery, presupposes therefore the first mystery—the mystery that has its foundation in creation—but it could not have come into being except through the mystery of Christ. It is nothing more than the extension of the mystery of Christ; all of it is filled with the mystery of Christ.

More precisely, the mystery of the Church is not separate from the mystery of Christ, nor that of Christ from the mystery of the Church, given that the Church is only the extension of the mystery of Christ and that the mystery of Christ, after Pentecost, does not stand on its own, apart from the mystery of the Church; and given, furthermore, that the mystery of Christ has only come into being in order to extend itself through the mystery of the Church. These two mysteries can be distinguished from one another in theory, but they are not separated in fact.[9] Christ is the real head, the fundamental hypostasis of the Church who constitutes and sustains her while imprinting His own life continually upon her and upon her members, who are held together in unity among themselves and with Him.

Just as all the parts and movements of the created world have the character of mystery because they participate in the all-encompassing mystery, so all the members and acts of the Church have the character of mystery, for Christ is present and active in all of them through the Holy Spirit.

* * *

Understood in a more particular way, the mysteries are invisible operations of Christ realized through visible acts by which the Church is constituted, acts that are officiated in the Church. It is only through the Church that Christ and the Holy Trinity come to be known in Their activity, yet They are known as mysteries because They are known within the tangible reality of the Church.

According to this more particular sense, therefore, certain visible actions of the Church have the character and name of mysteries. These have been instituted by Christ, and through them Christ unites with Himself—and therefore also with the Church—the individual persons who have faith in Him; through these sacraments Christ causes His union with them to grow. For by taking human nature to Himself, the Son of God has reconciled it and united it with the Father, and through His obedience, Crucifixion, and Resurrection He has deified it so that, by uniting us with Him as the firstfruits of our human nature, we may become like Him; we may constitute the Church and persist and grow within that unity with Him that is represented by the Church.

Through the mystery of baptism, each one becomes a member of the Church by means of an initial union of himself with Christ, whereas through the remaining mysteries this union of the members of the Church with Christ her head is either increased or restored, for the strengthening of the Church's unity; or else particular graces are given to certain persons: the grace of celebrating the sacraments, of preaching the word and maintaining its integrity, or the grace needed for other responsibilities, such as marriage, or for the restoration of health and well-being. Inasmuch, therefore, as the mysteries are tangible actions instituted by Christ through which He imparts His grace and brings those who believe in Him into union with Himself in order to constitute and preserve the Church, they must also be looked at according to their distinct individual aspects.

i. Visible and Invisible Operations: The Body, Soul, and Grace of Christ

From what precedes, we can see that the basis of the mysteries in their restricted sense is the Incarnation of the Word and His redemptive acts, namely, the fact that the Word took to Himself and preserves forever in His hypostasis not only a human soul but also a human body, and that through His redemptive acts He has raised these up to the state of deification. The concrete possibility, however, of a union between Him and ourselves through the mysteries, for the purpose of raising us up to the condition of His own humanity, has been posited by the Resurrection and Ascension, that is, by the pneumatization of His body, and to this condition His body was raised up in consequence of His sacrifice on the cross.[10] No sooner had the Spirit filled His own body, in which the malleable rational structure of its matter had become wholly transparent and pneumatized, than Christ was able—through the Spirit that radiates out from Him—to dwell within our bodies, imparting to them the different states through which He Himself had passed and the transcendent greatness to which He had attained, for the purpose of leading us to those same states and to that same transcendence.

Nevertheless, this reality is not achieved in a way that is purely invisible, or spiritual. There are two reasons for this: on one hand His body, even filled with the Spirit, has remained a real body, and on the other hand our body has to start from the visible, earthly image that the body of Christ possessed in order to advance through the various stages through which His body also passed, so that our bodies may attain to resurrection and spiritualization in the life eternal.

The mysteries, like the Incarnation of the Lord, highlight the great importance and eternal worth of the human body as the medium through which the divine riches and depths become transparent. It is in the body that the soul in its entirety exists, and in the body the soul can gain more and more influence, to the degree that the soul is filled with deification and the Godhead Itself increasingly reveals through the body Its riches and dimensions, which are infinite; for in Christ there "dwells bodily all the fullness of Godhead" (Col 2:9). To make the body holy means to make the soul holy too—indeed, to make of it an ever more transparent medium and an ever more adequate organ for the presence of the Godhead. Every gesture of the body has repercussions on the life of the soul, and every thought or sentiment of the soul has repercussions in the body. The more delicate, pure, and nuanced sentiments of the soul manifest themselves in the body, and the virtuous sensations of the body are imprinted on the soul. It is through the will of the soul, however, that the feelings of the body attain to a state of purity, for inasmuch as these bodily sensations are imprinted forever on the soul, when the latter raises up its body in the resurrection, it will also extend into the body the purity of its sensations. The roots of the body cannot be totally removed from the soul, just as it is impossible to see the body only as matter once it has been understood as a malleable rationality that is fully illuminated through the opening of its conscious reason to the infinite reason of God, or, conversely, as a rationality darkened because the activity of God is absent from it. This malleable rationality in the flesh is influenced by each person's subjective reason, namely, by the consciousness and will of the soul. That explains why it is possible for the body to have roots within the soul and to be able to imprint its sensations upon the soul, and vice versa. Hence the soul can lead the body toward a state wherein it can function as the organ that fulfills the purest and most noble yearnings of the soul. It is through the body that the personal characteristics of a human being—that is, his distinguishing personal traits—become transparent, together with the whole course of his earthly life. In this way the objective, malleable rationality in the body bears within it the mark of the subjective rationality of the human person, and indeed imprints its own mark upon the spiritual human subject. Consequently, even after the decomposition of the body, its mark remains imprinted upon the subjectivity of the soul.

The sensibility of the body passes through this same process. It becomes a sensibility specific to one person and as such reveals itself not only in the body but also in the soul. But the reverse also occurs: upon the subjective reason and conscious sensibility of the soul, there is imprinted either that purity or that defilement in which the life and sensibility of the body was played out, and this quality will remain in the soul until, at the resurrection, the soul in turn imprints it upon the risen body.

In general, the life of the soul cannot be pure within a body that is defiled. Hence a spirituality that comes down to only ideas, however refined it may be, cannot be the spirituality or integral spiritual state of the human person in a Christian sense.

Upon the objective rationality and sensibility of the body of Christ there has been stamped not only the mark of that subjective reason and sensibility that belongs to the pure human soul of Christ, but through these also the spiritual imprint of the highest light, purity, and power of the Godhead. Similarly, these same qualities are communicated, through visible actions that come into contact with our bodies, to our own bodies and souls.

A reciprocity between soul and body thus comes into being. All that touches the senses of the body is imprinted on the soul, and all the sensations of the body bear within themselves the stamp of the soul's specific sentiment and find their place within the light provided by the soul's understanding, whether this be more superficial or more profound. One cannot have an influence on the soul without acting on the body, and any influence on the body bears the mark of the soul. At the same time, it is through the body that the soul realizes every specific mode of its own being and every quality of purity or defilement that it has acquired, and, consequently, also those particular states of purity, received from Christ through the mysteries, that make contact with our bodies.

ii. Christ, the Unseen Celebrant of the Mysteries

Because grace is nothing other than the activity of Christ, the invisible celebrant of the mysteries is Christ. The sacraments take into account the bond between soul and body and the fact that the soul is open to God, for in Christ this openness of humanity toward God has reached its highest level. Through His activity Christ comes into contact with our bodies, and these contacts grow deeper and deeper within our souls. Through His body, which is full of power, Christ Himself is at work on our bodies, but through His body there is communicated to us not only the purity of His human sensibility but also the clear sensibility of His own soul and the power of the Godhead inherent in Him.

The Word of God has taken flesh so that He can gather in Himself, in the mystery of the unity of God and creation, not only souls but also bodies. In the same way that the body of Christ is not merely an intuitive symbol of a Godhead that is separated from Christ Himself but instead is fitted within the framework of His soul and divinity, so our flesh can be united in a real way with the Godhead of Christ through the agency of that physical contact that His body has with ours. There is something analogous here to that outpouring of power from the body of Christ that occurred through the medium of His garments when the sick would touch these. Inasmuch, however, as the body of Christ has become invisible and Spirit-filled through His Ascension, although always remaining a body with its own shape, the "touching" of His body and ours is no longer something visible; rather, He makes use of the matter with which our body is connected.[11] Christ wishes to sanctify our bodies by making use of matter, not through some other mode detached from the world of matter. This material world is the one with which our human body is literally in touch, which feeds it and gives it drink, which penetrates it and imprints itself upon the soul through the material sensations it produces—it is the world that Christ fills with His own power. Hence from among all the different forms that matter has assumed, Christ chooses those which are most basic to what is needed to sustain the human body: bread, water, wine, oil.

Some representatives of Western Christianity also feel the need to return to the understanding that primitive Christians had of nature, namely, as the medium through which Christ brings His activity to bear upon human beings.[12] In order to achieve this return, however, they must first return to an understanding of Christ as the Logos of created things and as the subject of that action whereby they are sanctified through the Holy Spirit. The medium through which Christ acts upon man cannot be nature as it exists in the wake of sin; it can only be a nature sanctified through the Holy Spirit, transfigured, a nature that in the essence of its energies (just as modern physics has revealed) is filled with the energy of the Holy Spirit and freed from the activity of the evil spirits.[13]

However, the Holy Spirit works this hallowing of nature principally for the benefit of human beings, transmitting to them that same purity that belongs to the now spiritual body of Christ and that seeks appropriation within the human body. But is it possible for Western man to return to such a life of holiness, which implies ascesis? The power of Christ shines forth from His sanctified body upon our bodies—and hence upon our souls too—through the agency of a nature that He makes holy through His own body, either in the moment when the mystery is being celebrated or beforehand, as, for example, in the sacrament of chrismation when the holy chrism is sanctified by prayers that precede the sacrament.

Christ penetrates our body with His own body, or at least with the energy from His pure body, making use of the material elements of the sacraments or the gestures of the priest for the purpose of placing within our bodies as well the beginning of this process of sanctification. Yet no such sanctification takes place without also some effort on the part of the one who receives the sacrament. We must underline here, with the greatest degree of seriousness, the Christological realism of the mysteries—that is, the activity of Christ, through the agency of His body, that is accomplished upon human persons, through the transfigured matter and priestly gestures of the sacraments. If the Person of the Logos is present within all created things, which are the malleable images of His own reasons (*logoi*), how much more is He able to be present in the material elements of the mysteries, hallowed as these are by special prayers of the Church, with His body already present within the milieu of the Church, a body made wholly spiritual and thus invisibly—but nonetheless really and efficaciously—present.

Yet although the material reality through which the Spirit of Christ acts in the mysteries is made holy by Him, there is no need to envisage any kind of separation between the matter of the sacrament and the grace or power of Christ that is imparted through it. Such a dualistic conception came into Western theology after Scholasticism had separated it from the theology of the Fathers and of the New Testament and after it had lost sight of the intimate bond that linked the Logos (the incarnate Word) and His activity to the natural world.[14] Matter is not merely a symbol, separate from grace, that occasions and intuitively interprets the unseen activity of grace; matter itself is filled with the power of God. It is only by failing to understand this ontological connection—by failing to link matter with the divine Word and with Christ's human body and our own—that Protestantism has come to a total separation between the activity of God in the soul and the matter used as the medium of this activity, hence its elimination of the sacraments.

Consequently, the scholastic distinction between *the external parts and the internal parts* of the sacraments is no more than the product of abstraction, and it need not be understood in the sense that the external part can be conceived separately from the grace or activity of Christ. What is seen is not only what can be seen, and grace, which is unseen, works through matter and through the visible gesture.

iii. The Christological and Ecclesial Character of the Mysteries

The mysteries are celebrated by the Church, or by Christ within the Church, for the sake of those persons who want to enter the Church and to remain within her, uniting themselves in this way to Christ Himself, who is the one who also instituted the sacraments. The sacraments clearly have as their focus particular persons, rather than either the community of the Church as a whole or groups of persons within the Church. This does not mean, however, that the sacraments are given to particular persons taken in isolation from the Church. It is through the mysteries that the Church—or, more exactly, Christ at work in the Church—carries out His activity of uniting particular persons to Himself and to the other members of the Church already in union with Him. The sacraments are the acts whereby Christ recapitulates, in Himself as Church, human beings—on condition that they believe in Him—who have become divided from God and from one another. The sacraments thus have a unifying function. As such they belong to the Church, which is the unity realized in Christ of those who have put their faith in Him, for the purpose of extending that same unity, or of attracting others within it and strengthening their unity in Christ, that is, the unity of the Church as the mystical body of Christ. No sacrament is celebrated for the sake of a person who is outside the Church in order to leave him outside the Church. No recognition is given to anyone for a sacrament received outside the Church so long as that person remains outside the Church. Baptism is celebrated in the narthex of the church but facing toward its interior once the person receiving baptism has renounced, facing the exterior, the one who holds sway outside the Church.

Although the mysteries are celebrated for the sake of persons who are considered in a distinct manner, they are always administered for the benefit of persons who are entering into the Church and, after their entrance, the sacraments are fitted to the needs of the persons who constitute the Church. Through them Christ exercises His activity upon persons at the moment of their entry into the Church, or persons who find themselves already within the Church, in order to strengthen the unity they have in Him and the unity of the entire Church. Thus through the mysteries the Church grows in unity with Christ and also within herself, and so does each of her members. "In [Him] the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph 2:21). "And He Himself gave some to be . . . evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:11–13).

Based on the fact that it is through the sacraments that the Church expands and maintains herself and grows spiritually, later Catholic theology stressed as the principal role of the sacraments their function of unifying believers within the Church. At times this role was given so much prominence that the union with Christ was relegated to a secondary position; according to the Fathers, this union was the union of the human subject with the body of Christ and consequently produced in human subjects a sensibility shared with Christ, with Christ Himself becoming the content of the person's feeling.

Karl Rahner goes so far as to consider that the Church, not Christ, instituted the sacraments. Christ established a single sacrament, the Church, and the Church has the power of activating her own sacramental nature in the distinct sacraments:

> Now the Church is in continuance, the contemporary presence, of that real, eschatologically triumphant and irrevocably established presence in the world, in Christ, of God's salvific will . . . By the very fact of being in that way the enduring presence of Christ in the world, the Church is truly the fundamental sacrament [*Das Ursakrament*], the well-spring of the sacraments in the strict sense.[15]
>
> The actualization or accomplishment of the eschatologically victorious redemptive grace established in the Church for the world and offered to all men, takes place, therefore . . . in an act of the Church in the individual's regard, whereby the gratuitous character of redemptive grace is proclaimed. This act of the Church in regard to man necessarily bears within it the structure of the Church's own nature. It is sacramental in accordance with the Church's character as the primal sacrament of grace.[16]
>
> From the principle that the Church is the primal sacrament it would be possible to see that the existence of true sacraments in the strictest traditional sense is not necessarily and always based on a definite statement . . . in which the historical Jesus Christ explicitly spoke about a certain definite sacrament . . . The institution of a sacrament can . . . follow simply from the fact that Christ founded the Church with its sacramental nature.[17]

Rahner does nothing more than draw the logical conclusion from the Catholic teaching on grace as the created "graced effect" flowing from the death of Christ and placed at the disposition of the Church,[18] and hence detachable from Christ.

Because grace, according to biblical and patristic thought, is the actual activity of Christ, it is Christ Himself, encountered within the Church, who is at work in any of the mysteries. Christ Himself extends and develops the life of the Church by means of all the sacraments. It is only visibly that these are celebrated by the priest as the representative of the Church; invisibly, Christ Himself is their celebrant. Whereas for Rahner,[19] baptism, for example, is the sacrament of entrance into the Church and all its other effects are implied in this, or in the sacrament of penance it is the Church that forgives the penitent, in biblical and patristic thought the one who is baptized unites himself directly with Christ ("Do you join yourself to Christ?" "I do join myself to Christ"),[20] and through this he becomes a member of the Church; likewise, the penitent is forgiven by "our Lord and God Jesus Christ through His grace and love for mankind," and the visible celebrant is just the one who, in his role as "unworthy priest and spiritual father," seconds what Christ does in this act of forgiveness.[21]

The activity of Christ Himself, who is at work in the mysteries, has to be considered in strict connection with the fact that it was He Himself who instituted them. However, He has instituted them because He practiced them from the beginning and continues to be their invisible celebrant, and hence also the one who sustains the Church. He Himself passed through baptism and thereby commanded that all should be baptized, declaring at the same time that He Himself would be present in the practice of this sacrament: "And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20). He Himself received the Holy Spirit as man after His baptism, so that all who follow after Him may receive the Spirit from Him in the sacrament of chrismation. He forgave sins and continues to forgive sins through priests, having empowered the apostles by breathing the Holy Spirit upon them, as a way for His activity to remain permanently within the celebration of this sacrament: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them;[22] if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:23). He founds the Eucharist on the basis of His death on the cross and His Resurrection, and He celebrates the first Eucharist, commanding the apostles and their successors to celebrate it, while He Himself remains permanently within it as both the sacrifice and the one who sacrifices. It is He who, having become the High Priest *par excellence*, remains invisibly active as such through the visible bishops and priests to whom He imparts the character of being the visible organs by which He, invisibly, celebrates the mysteries. He blessed marriage and healed the sick, and so the Church celebrates all these seven sacraments because Christ celebrated them visibly during His time on earth, and, after His Ascension into Heaven—or after His entry with the body within that plane of being where all is filled completely with the Spirit—He continues to be their invisible celebrant within His Church.

The relationship between the Church and Christ cannot be expressed merely by the idea that in the sacraments the Church represents an absent Christ, that the Church is the judicial vicar of a Christ who is absent; the relationship has to be understood as a dialectical one: on one hand the Church is filled with Christ, inasmuch as He is at work within it, but on the other hand the Church stands always in the position of one who prays to Christ and serves Him, and therefore is not identical with Him. The Church is the body, not the head, although there can be no union with the head that does not also mean union with the body. The consciousness of the believer lays the principal stress, however, not on union with the body but with the head. Here again, between the Catholic and Protestant understandings, Orthodoxy holds to a position that is more complex and balanced, more in harmony with a nuanced reality.

The light of that same ocean of grace, of brilliance and power that shines forth from Christ, penetrates into all those who receive the sacraments, and within this light and its penetrating energy, the same Sun of Righteousness is present and active. Just as the look of a father, filled with an identical affection and penetrating love, will concurrently light upon all his children, so Christ enters through the energy of His own love within all those who receive the sacraments, bringing them into union with Himself and with one another and in this way expanding the Church and strengthening her unity.

But in order for Christ to direct His activity, through the mysteries, toward each person, each person must believe in Him and in the decisive importance of the actions that Christ has chosen to be the means of His saving grace. In this way human beings will know the exact moments in which Christ principally acts upon them. Through this faith each such person envelops with faith the decisive dimension of the sacramental act celebrated invisibly by Christ Himself, or opens himself to Christ's saving activity. Hence in each mystery the recipient is addressed by name and makes a confession of faith (baptism, Eucharist, repentance, ordination) or of commitment (marriage, repentance, ordination). For Christ to address His saving activity toward each person through the sacraments, that person must by his own intentional act manifest the desire to accept a decisive personal relationship with Christ, who makes Himself available to all by His love and saving grace. There must be a total personal opening to Christ, a complete surrendering of one's destiny to Him, so that the redemptive wave from the ocean of Christ's grace and personal love can enter into the person with a special and salvific attention to his reality. All who believe enter through baptism, and make progress through the remaining sacraments, in this total personal relationship with Christ, but with the self-same Christ who is also found in relationship with all other believers. Hence the person also enters into relation and makes progress within his relationship with these others as well, adding himself to the Church as the mystical body of Christ. This is one of the meanings of baptism as dying with Christ to the old life and being born with Him into a new life that comes exclusively from Him. This same decision is asked of the believer in the other sacraments too.

Christ alone, not the Church, was able to establish the forms and stages of His relationship to believers through the mysteries. It is true that Christ commanded that baptism was to be accorded "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," but the phrase "in the name of" does not denote an activity of the Church in the name of a distant Trinity but in Its power. Christ is giving us assurance that in the visible act of the Church, each Person of the Holy Trinity, in keeping with His own position, is both present and certainly active.[23] For the Lord goes on to say, "And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20), and He speaks in a number of different places of the activity of the Spirit (e.g., John 20:22–23).

The presence and activity of Christ Himself in the mysteries is implied by the fact that the grace of the sacraments is the uncreated energy, or activity, of Christ. Through each sacrament He relives and instills in each believer the experience and power of certain exalted states by which He has raised up His human nature to its full height and deification. This alone explains the gradation within the sacraments, for otherwise this question would arise: Why is grace not given to us completely through a single sacrament? Nicholas Cabasilas says, "Let us now explain how each sacred rite unites to Christ those who have undergone it. Union with Christ, then, belongs to those who have undergone all that the Savior has undergone, and have experienced and become all that He has."[24] Just as the Savior received baptism first, so we too receive this sacrament first.[25] We grow in our human nature from a spiritual point of view just as He too deigned to grow in His human nature. We cannot skip over the different stages of growth that belong to this nature.

iv. The Priest as Visible Celebrant of the Mysteries

After these explanations concerning the external aspect and the invisible grace of the mysteries and of the role that they play, through Christ's own saving activity, in uniting the recipients of the sacraments to Christ and hence also to the Church, certain further clarifications must also be given regarding the bishop and priest as celebrants of the mysteries.

The priest is the visible organ through whom Christ, who is present in the Church, exercises His activity invisibly within the mysteries, imparting grace to those to whom these are administered.

Christ, become invisible to us through His Ascension, now makes use of a visible, personal instrument to exercise His activity upon those who are to be united with Him and who are to grow in Him by entering into the Church and pursuing their spiritual development within her. The need for certain material means or certain visible gestures also implies the need for visible persons through whom Christ can be at work invisibly upon those who seek union and growth within Him. The most effective kind of such work or activity is, however, always interpersonal. As a Person, Christ exercises His activity upon human persons in the most effective manner through the instrumentality of other human persons. It is only a human person who can perform actions that are expressive, that is, intentional and distinct from the unintentional movements that belong to the natural world. It is only a human person who can speak words that explain the meaning of what is being done and of what Christ intends through the sacraments. The gestures of the priest that make physical contact with the recipient of the sacrament, or to which the recipient responds through his own gestures of acceptance, cause the mystery to have a deeper impact within the very being of the one who receives it. This same impact also applies both to the words spoken by the celebrant of the sacraments and heard by the recipient and to the words spoken as a response and commitment by the latter.

These gestures, however, touch the entire being of the recipient; they do not merely enter through his hearing. Moreover, the words used in the sacraments are many, and their frequent repetition does not necessarily create a situation that is always accompanied by a particular solemnity; hence it is not easy for a single word to create in the recipient a decisive and unique significance of the kind created by a gesture, or a series of gestures, that is not repeated and that makes physical contact with the very body of the one who receives the sacrament. Finally, such gestures are not the property of the individual celebrant in his character as a man, nor does he choose them on the spur of the moment, but they are gestures that belong in common to the Church in which Christ Himself is at work. Not by words alone does the mystery prompt human beings to make their own the dying and rising with Christ to new life; in some measure it also causes them to imitate these acts and, through certain gestures, to make real this dying with Christ to the old life and the rising with Him to the new life, because it is not merely a question of words but of an entire series of acts that, throughout the whole Church, are unique and have been established on the basis of Christ's command. Through prayers, gestures, and declarations, the mystery does not merely give expression to but in a certain way also makes real what it expresses through words.

As such, *the mystery is a unique and decisive event in the life of the one who comes to faith and who continues to believe*: it is not simply a matter of words. The sacramental gestures of the priest or bishop, performed in the name of the Church and with her authority—that is, with the authority of Christ at work within the Church—really fulfill the purposeful activity of Christ, for it is Christ Himself who is fulfilling it invisibly, while the Church herself is fulfilling it visibly through these physical gestures.

The priest makes present to the eyes of the believer the authority of Christ and the Church. He does this as representative of both and in a manner corresponding to the relation between Christ and the Church: he represents Christ, who has designated him as the visible instrument through whose gestures and declarations Christ Himself celebrates the mysteries invisibly; he represents the Church inasmuch as he pronounces the invocation of the Holy Spirit in the name of the Church, and, consequently, the Spirit of Christ descends with His own activity upon the one who receives the sacrament, using the material elements and the gestures, prayers, and declarations of the priest.

This twofold but nonetheless indissoluble quality of the priest or bishop as representative is seen in his ordination, for this is celebrated by the bishop (or many bishops, in the case of an episcopal ordination), but Christ Himself is the one who ordains invisibly, that is, who transmits to a person the quality of being bishop or priest and visible celebrant of the mysteries, who empowers that person with His grace to serve as His own visible instrument in the celebration of the sacraments. However, the ordaining bishop or bishops invoke the Holy Spirit simultaneously in the name of the Church during the sacrament of ordination, and indeed the very community of the Church itself joins its own prayer to that which the bishop or bishops raise on high in celebrating an ordination, or which the priest or bishop offers up in the celebration of the other sacraments.

The Church's teaching that the validity of the mysteries celebrated by priest or bishop does not depend upon his own personal worthiness is based on the fact that the prayer and invocation of the Holy Spirit made by the celebrant is the prayer and invocation of the whole Church. Likewise, his sacramental gestures and his declaration of the grace that descends are accompanied by the faith of the Church that Christ Himself works invisibly through these instruments and that He Himself fulfills each time the promise He gave at the institution of the mysteries: that when they were being celebrated, His grace would descend upon those who received them.

Clearly, it is desirable that the priest or bishop give evidence of his own personal worthiness in his priestly or episcopal service, but in the case where this worthiness is lacking, its absence is supplied by the faith and worthiness of the Church. Karl Rahner says that if some priests are not worthy, the lack of their worthiness is made up for by the worthiness of other priests. And if all were to be unworthy, then this general unworthiness could not be covered over by anything else. In such a case, the holiness of the members would no longer depend upon a liturgical hierarchy, because this hierarchy would in fact no longer exist. An analogy can be drawn here with the sinfulness of the members of the Church. Although some members may be sinful, the Church remains holy through its other members, but were all its members to be sinful, then the Church herself would cease to be holy, for in the long run the Church is made up of human beings who believe in Christ and in whom Christ has come to dwell for this reason.[26] But it is more correct to say that the worthiness itself of some of the faithful, because it is the worthiness of the Church, makes up for the unworthiness of the priests. And believers of this kind will never be lacking.

Just as it was necessary to recognize the authority of Christ in the choice of certain material elements and in the establishment of certain gestures for the celebration of the sacraments, the same authority must be recognized behind the selection of certain persons to be the visible instruments for their celebration.

The selection of these personal instruments and their empowerment with a special grace also points to the fact that every sacrament is also an entry into personal communion with Christ and a foundation for a general communion with Him and with the other members of the Church who are united with Him. Moreover, every human person within the community of the Church fulfills the role of a link in the chain of communion with the incarnate Christ and with all other human beings who believe in Him. Through the mysteries Christ gives us the gift of Himself in order to create more exalted forms and higher degrees of communion with Him and between ourselves. As such, a human being must experience the fact that he enters, in the sacramental moment, into union with Christ, who is a supreme "Thou" and who raises him up to the level of communion with Himself, but who is also, simultaneously, a man who has descended to the level of communion with us through the agency of another man. For the believer, the experience of this entry into communion with Christ is occasioned necessarily by another person and, in the most appropriate of all ways, by a person empowered permanently by Christ and by the Church to bring about that communion with Him and to sustain and promote the communion of all believers with Christ and with one another. This mission that he possesses is made known objectively as something that he has from Christ and the Church. It is not a mere subjective presumption, nor a claim made by a particular person who would arrogate to himself such a mission and empowerment from within his own being. Only the Church, as the body of Christ, can give this kind of objective assurance; only through the Church can Christ objectively authorize someone to act as His visible instrument in the celebration of the sacraments, as the occasion whereby He Himself in an invisible way acts as their celebrant. Only thus can Christ make use of the mysteries in an objective way as a means of bringing believing human beings into union with Himself, because He unites them within a visible unity around certain persons who represent this same visible unity.

In the relationship with the priest, the believer possesses on one hand a visible, human "thou" as the central intermediary for communion with the community of all those who believe in Christ. On the other hand he encounters a "thou" who is the occasion for his own experience of relating to Christ as the Person who is simultaneously divine and human, supreme and yet intimate in the highest degree, a Person toward whom the priest himself points the way, for the priest is a human being among the rest, yet is himself sent with a mission from above. He has the palpable warmth of a human being but also the responsibility of bringing Christ into intimacy and union with his brothers and sisters. The more the priest's responsibility toward the Lord causes him to give himself to Christ within this mission, to humble himself even more, the more transparent he makes Christ to others.

By choosing a person and sending him with His own authority into the Church as celebrant of the mysteries, Christ is able to communicate, as a means of unity, both His own word and also that word concerning Him that has been preserved without change in the Church as a whole. Through this word, which makes up the content of the prayers of the Church, the very meaning of the sacraments is explained to the faithful, as are also the duties incumbent upon the faithful to use the power of the sacraments in order to imprint the image of Christ more deeply upon themselves in a real way. The priests and bishops chosen in this manner by Christ receive the authority they need to provide pastoral care for the faithful whom they are leading toward salvation.

By way of summary, *the constitutive elements of the mysteries* are *the material means* by which Christ Himself imparts the grace of salvation through the hand of the priest, through the prayer and affirmation of fact that the priest makes, and through the confession of faith and commitment on the part of the believer (at the baptism [of a child], this is usually made on the believer's behalf by the godparent). The sacrament comes about through *the action of the priest* accompanied by the affirmation of Christ's saving activity at work. It is celebrated by the touch of the priest's hand, either directly or indirectly via some material element, upon the body of the one receiving the sacrament, and is based on the latter's confession of faith accompanied by the priest's declaration of what is happening, itself a confession of faith in what is being celebrated. The mystery is a single whole that unites the recipient—through the hand of the priest or the sacramental matter used by him and through the declaration he makes—with Christ, and hence with the Church, after the preliminary *confession of faith by the recipient* and the prayer of the priest.

On some occasions, the one who receives the mystery is placed in contact with the hand of the priest through the intermediary of a material element, and on other occasions, without any such element. The personal contact in faith between the recipient of the sacrament and the priest as celebrant is necessary, however, for the celebration of the mystery. Yet it is always through this contact that the one who receives the sacrament enters into a direct connection, whether initially or as part of a process of growth, with Christ and with the community of the Church as His body. For this reason the recipient of the sacrament confesses his faith in Christ directly, and the priest/celebrant of the sacrament makes Christ present as the one who is Himself imparting His grace. Christ did indeed make use of mud in His cure of the man born blind, but on other occasions He healed the sick directly through the touch of His hand. The direct connection with Christ in which the recipient of the mystery is placed is shown with distinct clarity by the confession of faith made by the believer at the reception of the Eucharist. The believer speaks directly to Christ in this confession and makes plain his conviction that it is Christ who is communicating Himself with His body. When the priest says, "The servant of God *N.* partakes of the body and blood of Christ," he is affirming only this fact; he does not place himself between Christ and the believer but provides the occasion for them to meet. This same affirmation, that it is Christ who is acting directly in imparting His grace, is made by the bishop when he celebrates an ordination and by the priest in the sacrament of penance, although to this he also adds his own pardon. The same can be seen in baptism ("The servant of God *N.* is baptized . . .") and in marriage ("The servant of God *N.* is crowned . . ."), in both of which the priest is declaring not the accomplishment of some impersonal happening but the direct activity of Christ upon the recipient of the sacrament and the personal encounter of the recipient with Christ.

From all this it follows that, properly speaking, the celebrant of each mystery is Christ Himself, acting invisibly.

As far as the number of the mysteries is concerned, three of them are mysteries of complete union with Christ and of full entry into the Church (baptism, anointing with holy chrism, Eucharist); two are mysteries that bring renewed strength in Christ to those who have become weak in spirit or body (penance, holy unction); and two are means through which the recipient receives the power of fulfilling one of two things: either the special mission to celebrate the sacraments, to preach the word, and to exercise pastoral care within the Church (ordination), or the special duties connected with the married life (marriage). The question of the relations between all these mysteries will be dealt with in what follows.

CHAPTER 2

BAPTISM: THE MYSTERY OF REBIRTH THROUGH WATER AND THE SPIRIT

Through the mystery of baptism, instituted by the Savior, the human being who believes in Christ is reborn through water and the Spirit to the true life in Christ and becomes a member of the Church. The sacrament takes place through the threefold immersion of the one being baptized in water and in the name of the Holy Trinity. The celebrant is the priest or bishop, and it is only in the case of an urgent necessity, such as the imminent death of the one to be baptized, that this sacrament can be administered by any member of the Church. All these elements will be clarified in what follows.

A. The Unity between Water and the Holy Spirit as Womb of the New Man

At the beginning of the world, all the definite forms of created existence took their being in the Son from the activity of the Holy Spirit moving over the waters (Gen 1:2; Col 1:16). In a special way the human being was created in the beginning by the will of the Father, according to the image of the Son and in the Son, and through the breath of the Holy Spirit (Gen 1:2; 2:6).

This "original water" of the Bible is not identical with the particular types and instances of water that come after it. Nor is it by any means a material element having its own position over against the creative Spirit and capable of being transformed into anything at all. This is the "water" that was created by God and that possesses potentially in itself the reasons and potencies of all the defined beings—images of the reasons of the Logos—that will appear through the breathing of the Holy Spirit. Nor was this water by nature wholly passive. It was an undefined energy, illuminated by no determining quality whatsoever but existing within a universal motion, without any kind of concrete or solidified form, possessing in itself, through creation, the reasons of all the forms of existence as these are created and sustained according to the image of the reasons of the creating and sustaining Logos. The Spirit of God, who represents this same fluidity on the spiritual plane, causes this original water to make actually existent the forms imprinted upon it potentially by the creative act of the Logos, in shapes through which the Spirit reveals concretely the images of the reasons of the Logos. Thus the Spirit perfects the creation that was brought into being by the Logos, shining forth from within the Logos, who is on the one hand transcendent, but present within creation on the other. The Holy Spirit, with His own fluidity united to that of the original water of creation, is a force continually giving form to all defined beings of every degree.

In a similar fashion, the Spirit develops further the creation of the human being whose soul has been breathed into his body, he who was molded from clay by the will of the Father and through the activity of the Son and hence created with a special affinity to Him. The form of existence that appeared in the human being was the most exalted of the visible forms of creation, having in itself the image of the Logos as hypostasis, yet holding fast within itself that state of movement through which it was to grow in likeness with the Logos.

Yet even before all this, the universal energy that from the beginning lacked all definition began to take on defined forms, more or less concrete, through the activity of the Spirit. One part of it took the form of water, which, because of its affinity with the original water, represents a mobile reservoir from which all bodies are born, are nourished, and maintain their mobility. Nothing now is born or remains alive, or at least with some kind of mobility, without the presence of the water moved by the Holy Spirit. All organisms that are unable to make use of water become totally rigid and break apart as if they were dead.

After the separation of man from God, the Holy Spirit has not ceased to maintain the human race and to collaborate with human beings in the birth of subsequent generations, for apart from the Spirit nothing can be born. Nevertheless, human beings are now born principally through the flesh and bear the imprint of the flesh on their bodies, that is, the seal of their forebears' existence, an existence that has fallen away from the endless mobility and continuous ascension that marks life in the Spirit.

It is especially true that, without the Holy Spirit, there can be no birth of another human being, that miracle of endless originality. Nature gives birth only to forms that are one-dimensional and monotonous. Never-repeated newness exists only in the spirit. But the human spirit cannot be born without the contribution of the divine Spirit, nor can it remain in a state of continual newness and renewal without the Spirit. "Every human birth is already an absolute novelty: within a fundamentally commonplace layout of matter, there arises a face that is forever unique, like a surfacing of eternity."[1]

But human beings who are born after the advent of original sin, although they are to a certain extent born of the Spirit, are by and large separated from Him. The Spirit indeed assists at their birth and helps to keep them renewed up to a certain point, but this newness has important limits because the Spirit is not found in full communion with them. Hence they easily become more and more hard and opaque and die in both body and spirit. The Spirit is not present intensely within them as the principle of eternal mobility, nor can He keep their spirits participating endlessly in His own mobility or maintain their bodies' capacity to be nourished eternally from the movement of the cosmic water and of the Spirit. The breath of the Spirit no longer blows freely within them, for by the chains of the lower passions they have bound themselves to the repetitive processes of nature and now are only flesh instead of life itself.

Through His Incarnation the Word of God has introduced the Holy Spirit once again, and to the highest degree, into communion with creation. By bringing Himself hypostatically within the framework of creation by taking our flesh upon Himself, or rather, by making Himself the very hypostasis of creation, the Logos brings the Holy Spirit as hypostasis into His humanity and, through it, into creation. From this point onward the human being who opens himself to Christ through faith can be born again through the all-powerful activity of the Spirit. To this end it was necessary for the Spirit to take part anew and in an incomparable way—as He did not participate even at the creation of Adam—in the birth of the Son of God as man, the birth of the New Man.

In this way nature has been freed from the chains of the rigidity of natural laws and from the inexorability of an eternal death, and also from the power of demonic forces, a power that contributes to this bondage of the freedom of the human spirit and that in the end leads to the death of spirit and body alike. The restoration of the free image of the divine Logos in the human being has been brought about in its fullness by the Logos Himself, who, as hypostasis, takes to Himself—with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit—this image that is His very own. The Spirit extends Himself too, through baptism, into those human beings who believe in Christ, and refashions the image of the Logos within them.

Because human beings were not able to pass over to this new life because their own lives came to an end, they could not return to it except through another birth, one in which the Holy Spirit, the principal factor in this rebirth, would also render intensely spiritual, through baptism, the liquid reservoir of the universe. Although the incarnate Son of God had no need of such rebirth through baptism, for He was born of the Spirit from the beginning, He accepted baptism for our sake so that, in this regard as well, He might be the first human being to be baptized in water and the Spirit. By doing so, in a concrete way He united the Spirit within Him to the water, as womb and sustainer of life, a life now no longer subjected to death because of its complete union with the Spirit. In this way Christ "fulfill[ed] all righteousness" (Matt 3:15), the righteousness with which He was to clothe anew all those who put their faith in Him. He accepted both of these acts in succession because we have to pass through both ourselves. For this reason the Fathers see baptism as based in both the birth and the baptism of the Lord. The baptismal font is for them an image both of the womb of the Mother of the Lord and of the River Jordan.

At Christ's baptism, the Holy Spirit unites Himself again, for the sake of Christ, to water and to the whole of creation, which is so intimately connected to Him.[2]

Man is thus reborn as much from Spirit as from cosmic matter, inasmuch as the water represents this matter in a liquid state, as a reservoir and womb for every form of organized existence. Baptism has a cosmic significance. It means that matter itself, brought back to the condition of spiritual mobility, becomes a milieu for the creator Spirit, who is free and ever new in all His acts. The water of baptism is, in a hidden way, the matter of the age to come that will bear within itself the Son as resplendent hypostasis and the Spirit with His life-giving and ever-new energies. But this water has now been made spiritual for the sake of human rebirth and the reestablishment of humanity's relationship with God. The fullness of this spiritualization of water will only be made visible, however, in the age to come, for the purpose of bringing to fulfillment humanity's relationship with God, and this is when that water which was created at the beginning, as a means of developing the relationship between human beings and God, will be shown forth in its final state.

When a man is immersed in this water at baptism, he encounters Christ within it, or he is enhypostatized in Christ; he is fully personalized within the Person of Christ and is filled by the energies of the Holy Spirit that shine forth from Christ. The Son had to be immersed in human nature and, through that nature, in water, so that we, by immersing ourselves in water, can be immersed in His divine life, in His Holy Spirit.[3]

B. The Multiple Efficacy of the Act of Baptism and of the Priest's Declaration

The act of baptism consists in the threefold immersion of the recipient in water, accompanied by the declaration of fact proclaimed by the priest: "The servant of God *N.* is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." The nature of the faith-filled declaration and acknowledgement of fact in the words "is baptized" (with its analogous forms in the other sacraments: "is crowned," "is given communion," etc.) shows on one hand that the mystery is celebrated visibly through the act and word of the priest, but invisibly through the activity of Christ. Except in the case of an emergency baptism, the water is consecrated by the Holy Spirit even before the one to be baptized is immersed in it. But the mystery as a whole, in which the full activity of the Spirit also enters, is celebrated through the threefold immersion of the one to be baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity. The preliminary prayer for the consecration of the water entreats the Holy Spirit to come down upon it to cleanse it from the activity of demonic powers, so that the water may be prepared for the fullness of the Spirit's descent when the one to be baptized is immersed in it.

Baptism, that is, a person's immersion in water in the name of the Holy Trinity, produces the death of the old man and his rebirth to the true life of Christ. Simultaneously, the person is washed clean of original sin and of all sins committed beforehand, and the image of Christ is imprinted on him. In this way, by uniting himself with Christ, the person is introduced into the Church. All these different effects of the mystery, however, are contained within one another, or are aspects of one and the same comprehensive effect; it is not possible to speak of one of them without also speaking of the rest. It should be mentioned, moreover, that they all have a dynamic character.

i. Baptism as the Death of the Old Man and as Rebirth

If we want to speak of these various aspects of baptism in some sort of ordered way, however, we should note that the element that receives most emphasis is almost always rebirth. A person goes forth from baptism as a wholly new existence. He is not renewed in one respect only, but his very existence has become "other." He is like a newborn but on another plane: the plane of a life lived in common with Christ, a life filled with all the potentialities created by the process of spiritualization. His existence now has another foundation and a different movement; in a certain way, it has become enhypostasized in Christ, but it does not lose its freedom to separate itself from Christ. The paradox, however, is that the one baptized remains meanwhile the same subject he was before. Baptism does not produce the birth of a human being who did not previously exist but the rebirth—the being born again—of the same person (Titus 3:5), that is, of someone who also existed beforehand. But in order that the man born for the second time is not to be somehow added to the first one, it is necessary for the former man, the "old man" (Rom 6:6), to die. The birth of the new man follows upon the death of the man born beforehand from the flesh.

Nicholas Cabasilas has remarked that this sequence inverts the order that we see not only in natural man but also in Christ, who first is born and then dies.[4] Christ does not have to die first in baptism, however, in order to be reborn, because even His first birth was without sin and came from the Holy Spirit. He was baptized for our sake, in order that baptism would be based upon the sanctification of the universal waters. He baptizes humanity in Himself, just as He gives birth to it in Himself as the new humanity.[5]

But our baptism is linked both with the death and with the Resurrection of the Lord, which itself is a kind of rebirth for Him, as man, to the life that knows no death. In this way the inverted sequence cited above has its place in some way even in Christ, and hence produces within us too first death and then birth to a new life through our participation in the life and Resurrection of Christ. The Holy Apostle Paul says, "Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him" (Rom 6:8).

The sequence death-rebirth that occurs in the case of human beings at their baptism is the inverse of the sequence birth-death in the case of Christ only when we understand our death as a death to sin, as the death of the old man. And indeed our death in baptism also has this sense. But our death in baptism has a further meaning: it is *complete surrender of ourselves to God* so that we might live no longer for ourselves but exclusively for God. It is the total renunciation of our own selves, the forgetting of ourselves within a total surrender to God. In this "we have been united together in the likeness of His death" (Rom 6:5). But through this death we are immersed in God, the true life. For in God there is life unending, and by dying to God we enter, in the proper sense of the word, into life. The sequence is now to be seen only in the fact that we intentionally accept death to a life that is not, strictly speaking, life, but rather a life that leads toward death. In the act of making this intention real, however, there appears within us the life of God, authentic life. The death of the old man and the birth of the new man from God are thus virtually simultaneous, and so in baptism there is no real distance separating death from the beginning of the new life. When together with Christ man enters before God as sacrifice, he is made holy, that is, he is filled with the life of God, a theme that St. Cyril of Alexandria develops, following upon the Letter to the Hebrews.

Through this death, we are immersed in a world that transcends any desire on our part to live a life that is gradually drying up. We are immersed beyond the limits of our own creatureliness, which gradually exhausts itself, in the depths of a death that is apophatic, ineffable; or rather, in the depths of a life in God that transcends any defined or limited life, and where we receive the power of the life without death, life in God and for God. In this way what happened in Christ as man happens also in us.

By way of summary, we can say that this inverse sequence occurs in our case for the purpose of distinguishing us from Christ, that is, because of sin; but also for a purpose that is identical with that of Christ's inverse sequence, namely, our immersion as human beings in the unending life of God. This life comes about through our union with Christ as man in His death and in His surrender to God, so as to rise to eternal life in Him. In order for us to be united to Christ in faith, there is added to the death of the old man in us our dying with Christ, understood as a surrender to God and as the reception of eternal life in Him. Thus our death in baptism is not a death identical to that of Christ but only a death "in the likeness of His death," and this is so because we do not die only to be able to surrender ourselves to God but also to be able to die to the old man, the sinner. In this we are not like Christ, the man without sin. Hence our death does not have to mean that we cease continuing to exist, for whereas Christ at His death possessed a life fully perfected in its innocence through His perseverance in blamelessness before His death, we must assimilate ourselves to this life of innocence through the efforts we make after our baptism. Whereas Christ had within Himself this blameless life from birth and continually strengthened it until His death, we receive this life only in baptism, and so we have to work at strengthening it afterward. This is the second reason, closely linked with the first, why our death in baptism is only "in the likeness" of Christ's death.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem speaks of an "imitation" of the death and the Resurrection of the Lord in baptism, but he sees the power to effect this imitation as coming from our participation in the condition of the Lord.[6] This imitation is effort, and it can reach as far as an identification with the very actions of the one who first performed them and with the states of being that are produced by these actions. In the act of initial imitation of the dying and rising of Christ, there is concentrated the whole of the subsequent effort of imitation, and this imitation begins from the moment of baptism. It is meant to continue all one's life, imprinting a pattern of growth in our likeness to Christ that reaches its deepest point in a sacrificial state similar to that which Christ bore on the cross. The supreme paradox is that we do not actually suffer what the Lord suffered, but nevertheless we participate in what He suffered and accomplished:

> O strange and inconceivable thing! We did not really die, we were not really buried, we were not really crucified and raised again; but our imitation was in a figure, and our salvation in reality. Christ was actually crucified, and actually buried, and truly rose again; and all these things He has freely bestowed upon us, that we, sharing His sufferings by imitation, might gain salvation in reality. O surpassing loving-kindness! Christ received nails in His undefiled hands and feet, and suffered anguish; while on me *without pain or toil by the fellowship of His suffering* He freely bestows salvation.[7]

If I were to save myself through my own death, Christ would not be my Savior, but I do participate in His suffering. It is prolonged in me in a spiritual manner as I open myself to it through my will.

This also serves to explain the fact that on one hand our baptism is rightly considered to be an image of the birth and baptism of Christ, while on the other hand it is an image of His death and Resurrection.[8] We emerge from the bath of baptism to a life of innocence similar to that of Christ after His birth and baptism, but we come forth to such a life because we have died to sin and have given ourselves over totally to God in the likeness of Christ's death.

The principal effect of baptism is that of being born to a new life on earth. Hence in baptism Christ acts upon us principally as the one who was born and devoted His life totally to God through a death in the sense of self-giving, which would lead Him to another death in the sense of the end of His earthly existence. Christ's birth is united with His death, because in Him—as various older icons of the Nativity of the Lord demonstrate—the reality of sacrifice is present from the time of His birth. Hence in His baptism too Christ experiences with us His birth and Crucifixion as united to one another.

We do not, therefore, die in baptism in the way Christ died at the end of His earthly activity, but we are indeed raised up to a life of holiness and good works, dedicated to God. For this reason we are also not resurrected in the way that He rose again after His death. The life to which we are raised up from baptism is only a path leading to resurrection. "The birth in Baptism is the beginning of the life to come, and the provision of new members and faculties is the preparation for that manner of life. But it is impossible to be prepared for the future life unless we receive the life of Christ here and now. He became 'the Father of the age to come' (Is. 9:5 LXX)."[9]

Just as we must grow toward resurrection through a life of innocence and through the virtues, so too the condition of death that belongs to the old man and into which we enter through baptism, as well as the new life that we acquire there, has a kind of permanence and growth. To make this growth possible, Christ Himself continues to be with us in His state of sacrifice and resurrection, and He communicates this state of sacrifice and resurrection to us more and more effectively inasmuch as we ourselves grow spiritually. St. Cyril of Alexandria says, "Now the daily bringing of the gifts symbolizes the ceaseless and eternal carrying out of the sacrifice of Christ in every moment and the offering of gifts made by those who are righteous in faith. For there will never lack worshippers, nor will the offering of gifts ever cease, but Christ will offer Himself as one of us and on our behalf, mystically sacrificed in the holy tabernacle. He is our first and all-transcending offering . . . and in the measure that we bear His likeness, we too are consecrated sacrifices, for we are those who have died to sin, insofar as sin has been put to death within us, and we live to God the life of holiness."[10]

After we have accepted death to sin in baptism, together with that death which is the sacrifice of our being offered up to God, we must therefore go on with the process of dying, not the death of the old man, because he has died definitively, but *death as continuous surrender to God together with Christ*. In that case, however, Christ's death is no longer characterized principally as a death for the sake of our sins, the sins of the baptized; He remains in the state of sacrifice, of self-giving to God, so that we too might be with Him in this same sacrificial condition. Within this sacrificial state of His, however, there is most certainly also included the death that He accepted once and for all for the sake of the sins we committed before baptism, as well as for those which we may continue to commit after baptism.

This is the sense in which we must understand what St. Paul says in the Letter to the Romans: "[We know] this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin . . . Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:6, 8–11).

But although it is normal for the one who has died to sin in baptism not to die again, for the old man has died once and for all, nevertheless if he would remain in this definitive state of death in relation to sin, he must continue to bring to God the pure sacrifice that is in Christ, that is, the ceaseless offering of self: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God" (Rom 12:1). In this same sense, St. Cyril of Alexandria says that we only have entrance to the Father in the state of pure sacrifice, but that we can be in this state only if we are in Christ.[11]

ii. Baptism as the Power of Continuous Spiritual Growth

Here the death we have experienced in baptism shows its power continuously. The prolonging and deepening of the sacrificial state acquired in baptism shows itself in our virtues. Nevertheless, the power for the virtues to be a continuing sacrifice, a ceaseless renunciation of our own selfishness and the living of our lives for the sake of God and our neighbors, comes to us from the power inherent in Christ's sacrificial state. Through the virtues, therefore, we are offering sacrifice continuously to God together with Christ. Again, St. Cyril of Alexandria: "Christ is Himself the holy sacrifice that spreads out a pleasing fragrance through the virtues."[12] The virtues at one and the same time, however, represent the development of the new life in Christ and our own fulfillment according to His likeness.

The death that we experience through the virtues also reveals to us the existence of that death that is bound up with sin, whereas in the case of Christ, the death that He continually shares with us does not represent His resistance in the face of a sin that He might possibly commit but rather a surrendering of Himself to God, made for the sake of its own inherent value. For we must remember that not even Christ's death on Golgotha was a death to the old man within Him; moreover, we should also not forget that there is no human being who has never sinned again after baptism. Thus, although it might occur in some cases that the death of those who have been baptized is only death as surrender to God and as resistance to sin, these persons' death is also combined with a death to sins they have committed. Indeed, even the death that is shown to be a resistance against sin is also a death to sin, and not merely or purely a self-offering to God.

Clearly, we also receive from Holy Communion the power to live this life of sacrifice that is shown through the virtues, but the virtues grow as a result of baptism too. Through the Holy Eucharist Christ adds to the power that He has given us as a gift in our baptism.

St. Gregory of Nazianzus is another who speaks of the continuance of our sacrifice from the sacrificial power communicated to us in our baptism, and of the identity between this sacrifice and the new life that we lead from the power of Christ. His remarks follow upon the observation that it is necessary for us to activate through all our senses the innocence and the impulse toward good works that were given to us in our baptism: "Let us give to God all our members which are upon the earth; let us consecrate them all . . . Let us bring ourselves entire, let us be reasonable holocausts, perfect sacrifices; and let us not make only the shoulder or the breast a portion of the Priest to take away, for that would be a small thing, but let us give ourselves entire, that we may receive back ourselves entire; for this is to receive entirely, when we give ourselves to God and offer as a sacrifice our own salvation (ἱεροθργῆσαι τὴν ἡμῶν αὐτῶν σωτηρίαν)."[13]

The new life is a gift from above that comes to us through baptism, but it is a gift that must be preserved and developed by our own diligence. "Only be diligent as to your cleansing, 'setting ascension in your heart' [Ps 84:6], and keep with all diligence the remission which you have received as a gift, in order that, while the remission comes from God, the preservation of it may come from yourself also."[14] The gift is also a duty. Anyone who does not keep safe and develop the condition of spiritual cleanness received in baptism makes himself into an abode for even more demons than before the time of his baptism and will be saved only with difficulty (cf. Luke 11:24–26). Whoever has not made use of the powers received at baptism nor of his own powers—something more easily done due to the reception of these same baptismal powers—demonstrates by a kind of cynicism or bluntness that he is no longer disposed to make any use at all of his powers. And these become totally paralyzed.

> You have touched the hem of Christ and your issue has been stayed. Guard, I pray you, the cleansing lest you should again have a hemorrhage, and not be able to lay hold of Christ to steal salvation; for Christ does not like to be stolen from often, though He is very merciful . . . You were raised up from your bed, or rather you took up your bed, and publicly acknowledged the benefit. Do not again be thrown upon your bed by sinning, in the evil rest of a body paralyzed by its pleasures. But as you now are, so walk, mindful of the command, "Behold, you art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing happen to you" if you prove yourself bad after the blessing you have received. You have heard the loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth," as you lay in the tomb; . . . Do not again become dead, nor live with those who dwell in the tombs; nor bind yourself with the bonds of your own sins; for it is uncertain whether you will rise again from the tomb till the last and universal resurrection, which will bring every work into judgment, not to be healed, but to be judged, and to give account of all which for good or evil it has treasured up.[15]

Through these words St. Gregory provides the foundation for the belief that baptism is not to be repeated: this foundation is the obligation to sin no more once we have received the power of avoiding sin. Clearly, there is no affirmation here of the definitive loss of those persons whose later sins do not withdraw them from the body of Christ, that is, the Church, or from relationship with Christ. Those who sin still remain within a certain connection with Christ without needing to be baptized again. The weakness of their connection to Christ is healed through the mystery of penance. However, the sin of deliberately denying Christ and abandoning His mystical body is another thing. Such persons are indeed lost if they do not come back again into the Church, making use of the power they received in baptism. Yet even in this case they are not baptized again, because the grace of baptism is not given a second time. They are not born again twice because even in the physical realm no one is born a second time from the body, nor do persons come into this world a second time bearing original sin.

The virtues are not only a total giving of self to God but also baptized persons' giving of themselves to those who need their help: "If you see someone naked clothe him, in honor of your own garment of incorruption [baptism], which is Christ, . . . If you find a debtor falling at your feet, tear up every document, whether just or unjust. Remember the ten thousand talents which Christ forgave you."[16]

The new life in Christ, received in baptism, is therefore the liberation from the bonds of original sin. Again, this liberation gives to the one baptized the power to sin no more and a readiness to put this power in practice. Yet to put it into practice is a duty of the one who has been baptized. In this sense the baptismal bath has cleansed us from our previous sins but not from those we may commit after baptism, although it has given us the power to cleanse ourselves easily even from these. "Purification must not be played with, but be genuinely impressed upon you; you must be made perfectly bright, and not be merely colored; you must receive the gift, not of a mere covering of your sins, but of a taking them clean away."[17] Unless a human being cooperates on the basis of the power received in the sacraments, these can begin to be considered a kind of magic that provides a person with the right to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, simply because the sacraments have been celebrated over him as if he were a mere object, and with no requirement on his part that he make use of their power through his own effort toward transformation and perfection. They are deemed to be salvific with no requirement that, through the help of the powers of the sacraments, he undergo any real transformation into the image of Christ.

The work of a human being after baptism therefore consists of a kind of assimilation and imprinting of the innocence of Christ upon his own being, in such a way that this innocence can no longer be separated from that being. This explains why there exist different levels at which the divine powers and good deeds of Christ have been appropriated.

iii. Baptism as the Restoration of Christ's Image in Man

The Spirit is united with human beings in the water of baptism not only because *water is the primary foundation of life on the plane of creation* but also because it is the universal means of cleansing, that is, of bringing to light the authentic image of all concretely existing things, the image from which each takes its own particular beauty.

Sin weakens our reality as persons, especially with regard to what each person possesses distinctively. It pushes us closer to a kind of animal quality that is incapable of expression, something inhuman and impersonal, subject to the automatic movements of repetitive passions. Sin weakens the unity that holds together the constitutive powers of the human being and indeed the very force of his own nature (or being). His nature loses its unity and the power it can lend to his efforts to achieve the good. More and more it is pulled in the direction of what is evil, now by this passion, now by another, drawing the human being closer to nothingness.[18] The body of such a person carries out all its biological functions, but the person himself is virtually absent from his own being, "without recognition and without conscience."[19] The human being descends to the level of a "biological individual."[20] Lacking any ray of light coming from God or going toward God, the human being becomes "darkness," like one "who is nothing."[21] He lives out an existence that is insubstantial, inconsistent, almost like the illusion of existence, a "dead life."[22] Cabasilas speaks of the "deathless dead."[23]

Inasmuch as the weakening of the divine image in the human being, or the weakening of his relation to God, coincides with the weakening of his very nature, there is no difference between the life-giving effect of the water of baptism and its function of cleansing or restoring the image. By the very fact that the image of God is restored in man, the latter recaptures the divine life that knows no death.

Hence the consistency of the human being resides in the image of God that is maintained within him, shining forth from its divine model, and by his own human effort to keep himself in communion with God. If a man loses this divine image or weakens it, he descends into inconsistency, into a state devoid of image. Having become an impersonal chaos without any unity, this man's nature no longer responds in complete earnestness to the call that is addressed to him by name. For him, the name no longer possesses any depth of meaning; it implies no obligation to answer, to make any response before the supreme tribunal of God: he sees only what is on the surface. For him, the name no longer represents a distinct self-consciousness of himself or of a personal responsiveness that rests with him as such. For it is only when a human being hears the voice of God calling him by name that he truly responds; only then does he take his name seriously. And it is only then that the name becomes for him a distinguishing and formative principle and, most profoundly, a personalizing force.

It is in baptism that the human being enters fully into this relationship with God, a relation of call and response. This is why it is through baptism that he also receives his name, which expresses the relationship with God in which he has been placed and which he must both honor and fulfill. He is baptized by name, not as some generic being: "The servant of God *N.* is baptized." Strictly speaking, because it is Christ who raises man up through baptism to a new life, it is the Lord Himself who brings him into this life, a higher life where man is capable of response; He calls him by name through His power of absolute obligation. He thereby establishes the foundation of a personal relationship with the one baptized, a life of eternal response to His call. The human being is thus pulled out of the indistinct human mass, the general anonymity, to become a person possessed of his own responsibilities, which are founded on the eternal ability to respond that he has before God. He is born into this new life through the will of Christ but also through his own will, through the response he makes to the calling of his name, something that did not occur at the time of his birth in the flesh. It is in baptism that the human being receives his name, and this makes him conscious of his personal responsibility. This name gives him his own deep, personal form, which is the image of Christ in him. The animal is not a person, because it is not the image of God. It is through this quality of being a person or image of God that the human being responds to God, developing and maintaining himself within this responsible relationship with God. Hence this unique personal form of each human being imprints itself more and more upon him, and in it the very form of Christ is also being imprinted. But this occurs through the exercise of a man's responsiveness to the call of Christ as he increasingly gives a positive answer to what Christ is asking of him.

Yet already in baptism the human being has received the form of Christ within his own personal form, because he has entered into relationship with Him. The one baptized will always remember the connection between himself and Christ, the bond linking his own image and that of Christ imprinted upon him. In this sense he has already clothed himself with Christ from the time of his baptism. Christ has given him His own appearance, and the man must see to it that this aspect of Christ in him is always becoming clearer as he strives to live his life more and more according to the model of Christ.

Nicholas Cabasilas says,

> "New birth" and "new creation" mean nothing else than that those who are born and created have been born previously and have lost their original form, but now returned to it by a second birth. It is as when the material of a statue has lost its shape and a sculptor restores and refashions the image, since it is a form and shape effected in us by Baptism. It engraves an image and imparts a form to our souls by conforming them to the death and resurrection of the Savior . . . For until gold, silver, and bronze are softened and melted by fire, they are mere materials to the onlooker, so that they are called merely by the name of the material, "gold" or "silver" or "bronze." But when each acquires a shape from the blows of the iron tools it is no longer the material only, but the shape that appears to the onlookers, just as clothes become apparent to them before the bodies that they cover. Accordingly each receives a proper appellation, such as "statue," "ring," or something else that no longer indicates the material but the appearance or form only.
>
> Perhaps this is why the saving day of Baptism becomes the name's day for Christians. It is then that we are formed and shaped, and our shapeless and undefined life receives shape and definition. Besides, we become known to Him who knows His own . . . On this day we hear the significant word, our name, as though then we were properly known, for to be known by God is to become truly known.[24]

The image of Christ is a genuine and luminous garment; it is Christ Himself. "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal 3:27). This garment does not remain in contact only with the surface of the skin like ordinary clothes, but it imprints itself on our whole being. It is Christ Himself, but at the same time it is a special relationship with Christ, personal and unique to each human being. The human being therefore receives a name proper to himself and knows that now, when he is called by that name, it is he himself who is being addressed integrally, that he must respond with his whole being. This garment must not be soiled, for that would be to defile the image of Christ and also our own image as person, to tarnish it once again by that same defilement. The baptismal garment represents Christ, but it also represents us who have been clothed in a personal way with the image of Christ, and this is so because in all the words and acts that show who we are to others, it is not only the Christ who has been imprinted on us that is made visible but also our own image of ourselves, refashioned as persons according to His image.

As mentioned, the image of Christ, and the image we have received from the imprint of Christ's image upon us, increases in its clarity through the response that we make to Christ's call to imitate Him in His deeds. Christ makes this appeal, however, through the preaching of the apostles and the ministers of the Church who portray among us the model of Christ (Gal 3:1). Hence St. Paul declares, "My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you" (Gal 4:19). Christ will indeed take shape within the faithful and at the same time give them the personal form that marks them as having lived in a unique responsiveness of their own. Such persons are no longer in bondage to "those [things] which by nature are not gods" in the manner of those who do "not know God," for they "have known God, or rather are known by God" (Gal 4:8–9); that is, He calls them by name, beginning from baptism and continuing through the whole course of their life.

The call that Christ addresses to the Christian beginning at his baptism certainly reaches, through the preaching of the apostles and the ministers of the Church, to his very conscience, and there it urges him to respond to the claims of Christ in every situation. This appeal is also addressed to the Christian through his neighbors, who at any moment may have need of his spiritual and material help. In all the circumstances of life, Christ addresses Himself to us and, through all these calls and positive responses, the image of Christ and our own personal image imprinted with the image of Christ become clearer and clearer.

The image of the human being as person depends on, and is imprinted to such a degree by, the image of Christ, and his response to Christ's call grows to such an extent from the power of Christ's call, that the baptized Christian—if he continues in this state and deepens it—can say with St. Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20). The human being has henceforth renounced living only for himself, just as Christ renounced living a life that is not dedicated to God and to each one who believes in Him.

St. Paul also speaks of these matters: of the increasingly clear impression of the image of Christ upon the baptized; of this process as bringing to light their genuine and personal faces from out of the obscurity of an undefined and formless generality, or from the disorder of the lower impulses. "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor 3:18). As we mirror more and more the image of Christ and thereby make our own personal image more and more distinct, we become increasingly luminous, for our image as person is the image of freedom, of conscience and responsiveness, and in these things the glory of the image of Christ as Person is reflected. In these same qualities can be seen the strongly accentuated features of an existence lived for the sake of God and for the sake of every good that God has willed that we may perform it for the benefit of others.

Therefore, baptism has come to mean our "renewal," our exodus from a realm of monotonous repetition. But renewal is not a static given. It is a life lived in a continuous newness, in an unending joy that derives from this newness, and in one or another of the forms through which our goodness and love become manifest. For the person is always new through his responsive freedom and his ceaseless love, always inventive in doing something new for God and for the good of his neighbor. In this he differs from the old man, who is locked always within the same fossilized state, enslaved to the monotony of the same old passions and selfishness, with nothing new either to say or show to anyone else. "You have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (Col 3:9–10). The new man progresses toward the fullness of the knowledge of God, of his neighbors, and of himself; through his love for God and his fellow men, he advances toward the fullness in which Christ is to be found.

The Fathers gave baptism the name "illumination." By this name they sought to bestow upon the human face a markedly personal and responsive character and an increasingly profound consciousness of the eternal meaning of personal life and of its continuation, and also a consciousness of the eternal meaning of the whole of reality in God. This is what is lacking to the person who thinks that everything comes to an end in death, that the whole meaning of human life is to be reduced to the satisfaction of a few bodily needs, always basically the same ones. Through baptism the human being is illuminated; in baptism he is penetrated by the light of the Word of God, who, because He is eternal, has bestowed through the Incarnation the gift of eternity upon the human nature that He assumed and raised up, and upon all those who accept Him in baptism.

Those born in baptism receive the image of Christ and are given the possibility of developing the personal character of their lives through their responsiveness to Christ, and through their contemplation and imitation of Him.

But a human being is not accepted by Christ at baptism within this personal relationship unless he has shown, after a certain amount of preparation, that he himself desires this; unless he takes it upon himself, through a corresponding obligation to respond through the whole of his life to the call of Christ, to use the power that is given him in baptism—namely, union with Christ—so as to live in conformity with the will and the example of the Lord. *Life at this level of personal responsiveness begins from the very moment of baptism.* From the outset God takes man seriously. He wants him to be a responsible person. The human being has to show that he desires a life like this before he receives the power to live it in baptism. Thus, according to St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *a "covenant" is struck between God and man*:

> For, to say it all in one word, the virtue of Baptism is to be understood as a covenant with God for a second life and a purer conversation. And indeed all need to fear this very much, and to watch our own souls, each one of us, with all care, that we do not become liars in respect of this profession. For if God is called upon as a Mediator to ratify human professions, how great is the danger if we be found transgressors of the covenant which we have made with God Himself . . . If after baptism the persecutor and tempter of the light assails you (for he assailed even the Word my God through the veil, the hidden Light through that which was manifested), you have the means to conquer him. Fear not the conflict; defend yourself with the Water; defend yourself with the Spirit, by Which all the fiery darts of the wicked shall be quenched.[25]

This comprehensive obligation assumed by human persons in baptism is given expression through the declaration repudiating Satan and all his works as well as through the pledge of allegiance made to Christ, and then by the more specific confession of faith in Christ, which takes place in the recitation of the Creed. In this way the one to be baptized assumes the obligation not to serve the purposes of Satan any longer in the world by committing evil acts, but rather pledges himself to defend the faith in Christ and to live in accordance with that faith, following the example of Christ.

The person thus consents to no longer be the slave of Satan or of any of his evil forces but instead the servant of the loving Christ, given over to Him totally. His freedom, therefore, is no longer chained to the passions but is free to seek the authentic growth and continuous newness of the person.[26] Hence in his declaration at the moment of baptism, the priest says, "The servant of God *N.* is baptized . . ." Both this quality of being "servant" of God and the person's name itself are mentioned in all the mysteries.

In the eyes of God, the human being is person and as such is free. God knows him as person, but He knows him as such precisely because he became a partner with God in a loving relationship of steadfast fidelity, and because he committed himself to live a life of loving responsiveness before God. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free" (Gal 5:1), and "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty" (Gal 5:13), or again: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom 8:2). St. Paul speaks in this way, and yet at the same time always refers to himself as the "slave" or "servant" of Christ and to Christians as "those who are in Christ" (Rom 8:1). Those who are baptized "have become slaves of righteousness" (Rom 6:18), a righteousness that is goodness and love and cannot be exercised without a great effort to free oneself from the passions, which are the real chains binding a man. This slavery is a free slavery, a service offered on the part of an intense desire to remain free and to work according to the law of freedom and of faithful love (cf. Jas 1:25).

iv. Baptism as the Gate of Entrance into the Church

But if human beings are called to a life of personal struggle to defend and grow in their relationship with Christ, and to strengthen themselves as persons freed from the passions that are common to a fallen and hardened nature, that does not mean that they are called to an individualistic kind of existence, which is itself an enslavement to self-will and pride. It is also a paradox that precisely within the form of existence that is common in the passions of a debased nature, there appear certain divergences that split human nature apart, in fact splitting it into identical fragments devoid of any authentically personal character. By contrast, the true form of personal existence is a form of existence in communion, a communion within which each person grows in the originality of his own self-giving in the measure that he surrenders himself and in accordance with the distinct gift that he has received, and to the degree that he puts himself totally at the service of others.

For, in the one who receives baptism, the raising up of the old man from death to that state of true life that belongs to the new man, which is lived in a personal relationship of responsiveness to Christ, means that he is raised up to a state in which this responsiveness is activated concretely in his relations with the rest of humanity, and in a particular way with the community of those who constitute the Church, the communitarian body of the Lord. To adhere to Christ is to become one of His members in the body of the Church; it is to build oneself as a living stone into the dwelling place of the Lord, resting on the foundation of the apostles, having the same faith, the same way of life, illuminated by the same Christ, so that as a consequence the same image of Christ dwells in and is visible in all, although Christ manifests Himself differently through each person by the way he fulfills the service corresponding to the gift he has received. In one of the baptismal prayers addressed to God, the priest says the following: "Form the image of Your Christ in him (*her*) who is about to be reborn through my unworthiness, and edify him (*her*) on the foundation of Your Apostles and Prophets, never to be torn down. But implant him (*her*) as a sapling of truth in Your Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, never to be uprooted."[27] It is only by abiding in the Church that the newly baptized abides in Christ.

Hence after the baptism, which is celebrated in the narthex of the Church, the newly baptized is led before the holy royal doors, where he communes of the body and blood of the Lord as a sign of full incorporation into the Church, and, if he is male, he is led into the altar,[28] where the priest takes him in a circle around the holy table. This symbolizes his introduction into the highest mysteries of the knowledge of Christ, so that he too may become a preacher of faith in Christ and the priest of his family, that is, the one who bears primary responsibility for the faith and life in the church that is his household, the first to bring sacrifice and to sacrifice himself on their behalf, just as Christ is this for the sake of the Church in general (Eph 5:25) and the bishops and priests fulfill the same role as the visible instruments of Christ.

The introduction of the recipient of baptism into the Church is signified in a special way by the fact that baptism is celebrated by the priest or bishop. Through his ordination, the celebrant represents not only Christ but also the Church. He never represents Christ in isolation from the Church but a Christ whose activity radiates out from the Church and works within her in order to bring within the Church those being baptized. Hence *the valid celebration of baptism does not depend on the personal worthiness of the priest* so long as the Church upholds him as its minister: for it is in the name of the Church that he celebrates the sacraments.

Obviously, this does not mean that the priest or bishop should be careless in fulfilling his ministry. Such unworthiness will certainly not go unpunished, for God Himself, by speaking within the conscience of the priest or bishop, takes care to keep his unworthiness within certain bounds. In this way God keeps the Church as a whole connected to Himself.

To those who were avoiding baptism at the hands of certain priests because they believed that these men were unworthy, St. Gregory of Nazianzus had this to say:

> Do not ask for credentials of the preacher or the baptizer. For another is his judge, and the examiner of what you cannot see. For man looks upon the outward appearance, but the Lord looks upon the heart. As for yourself, let every one be trustworthy for purification, so he is only one of those who have been approved, not of those who are openly condemned, and not a stranger to the Church. Do not judge your judges, you who need healing; and do not make nice distinctions about the rank of those who will cleanse you, or be critical about your spiritual fathers. One may be higher or lower than another, but all are higher than you . . . The grace of Baptism is the same, and any one may be your consecrator who is formed in the same faith.[29]

The fact that the priest who celebrates baptism does so as an authorized representative of the Church enables the sacrament to be celebrated in the absence of a priest—only in urgent cases and because baptism is an absolute necessity for salvation—by any other layperson who is a member of the Church, as a general representative of the Church and a member of the universal priesthood. For baptism signifies the arms of the Church stretched out to receive those who wish to come into her bosom and escape from the waves of everlasting despair, and these arms can take the concrete form of any member of the Church.

With regard to the recognition of baptism celebrated outside the Church, the freedom with which the Church has acted in accepting a baptism of this kind, performed by way of a threefold immersion or pouring or sprinkling of water in the name of the Holy Trinity, shows that when the Church by economy[30] receives within herself a person who has undergone such a baptism, she is able to accord to it a validity that extends over the outer shell of what was celebrated the grace-filled environment of the Church, which existed in a more or less marked way in the Christian denomination from which the baptized person came. The recognition of such a baptism on the part of the Church represents a kind of delayed completion of the external dimension of the rite through the power of God, which the person baptized outside the Church now receives when he places himself in full agreement with the faith of the Church. Nevertheless, the Church can indeed baptize even those who come to it with an external baptism, and this for two reasons: the first is that the Christian group from which the person has come may lack the fullness of grace and of Christ's saving activity; the second is that it may lack the fullness of faith.

Baptism puts the one who receives it into an intimate relationship not with Christ alone but with the entire Holy Trinity, for Christ is the Son of the Father and makes us, in Him, sons of the Father too, by freeing us from our slavery to the impersonal elemental spirits and passions (Gal 4:3, 9), which are looking to find satisfaction not in the supreme communion of the Trinity but in a blind and individualistic sensuality, stirred up by these elemental spirits and leading us to death. Now it is the Spirit who gives warmth to the love we have for the Father, and it is the Father who strengthens us with His own eternal power and love. The Spirit brings the Father's love for the Son and the

Son's love for the Father into our own hearts, which have been united to the Son, and that is why we are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and thereby immersed within the mutual love and common power of the three supreme Persons.

C. The Absolute Necessity of Baptism for Salvation

If it is baptism that, through the union with Christ, does away with the substance of that original sin that separated us from God and was stamped upon our very nature, and if, apart from this union with Christ, there is no entry into the Kingdom of God, then it is clear that baptism is absolutely necessary for our salvation (John 3:3). It is also absolutely necessary for children, for they too, through their birth in the flesh, share in this same state of separation from God, and so they too must pass over from the condition of their bodily birth and their destiny to perdition into the condition of those born of water and the Spirit and, consequently, of the saved (John 3:5–6). Insofar as no one is clean of defilement even if his earthly life lasts only a single day (Job 14:4), children too clearly share in this stain, not through their own personal sin but through their birth. It is only Christ who, as man, differs from us in this respect, for He was made like us in every respect except that of sin (Heb 5:14). St. Paul considers that all men without exception are subject to sin because of Adam, and all must, in baptism, bury the old man of sin in order to be born as new men in Christ. The fact that death has dominion over all is for him a sign that sin and its punishment reign over all, for death is the wages of sin: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Rom 5:12; cf. v. 15). He goes on to say to Christians, "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:11). Through baptism the sinful body has been destroyed (cf. Rom 6:6), and now, even if we die physically, we are no longer subject to eternal death: "Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him" (Rom 6:8). We will live together with Christ, "for death no longer has dominion over Him" (cf. Rom 6:8, 9).

We cannot receive this new and eternal life with Christ except through baptism "in the likeness of His death." Only "if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection" (Rom 6:5).

Children cannot be deprived of this dying with Christ to the old man within them, nor of the foundation of the eternal life that Christ has placed in every human being.

It is true that children are not able to offer to Christ the confession of their faith as an opening up of their very being to the indwelling of Christ within it, but nevertheless they do belong to a Christian family that is living in the Church, and no barrier of an individualistic consciousness has yet been raised up between the children's spiritual life and that of their family or of the Church herself. This life of the Spirit penetrates more and more into their own being without hindrance. It likewise enters into children belonging to those Protestant denominations that do not practice child baptism, through the concern for Christ that exists within these groups. If the children from these denominations later come to decide to make their own profession of faith, they will do it on the basis of that faith that has penetrated within them beginning from their earliest years.

Baptism is also an act by which the spiritual life of the family penetrates into the children. When the members of a family make a particular confession of faith, it is certain that the children too will do the same. It is a matter of time: what has been planted within them and is found as a potentiality within them will come to manifest itself later and pass into act.

No one knows exactly the point at which a child consciously appropriates to himself the content of his family's spiritual life. The time when he begins to give expression to it can be determined, but before that moment he has already appropriated it in its specific essentials. When a child begins to speak, he articulates what he has appropriated at a much earlier time, gradually, beginning even from his earliest days. The words and phrases that have taken root within him and that he in turn expresses at a particular moment are not neutral or empty of all content; they bear the seal of a content that has a certain specificity. Moreover, this content took root within the child not only through words but also through acts and attitudes. The act of baptism can be considered one of these. In any case, it is a determining factor, through the spiritual life that the family lives, a spiritual life that implants itself within the child.

As the child appropriates the spiritual content of his family, he also appropriates the faith that is stamped upon this content and is determinative for it. The child longs to receive this faith and shows it openly, willingly, and joyfully. He is glad to show that he too is like the older members of the family and can manifest his faith together with them. Thus he can be baptized because of the faith of the family, which, without any doubt, he himself will make his own.

Children open themselves more easily to the faith that is confessed by their family members, more easily than do adults or even adolescents, because individualistic pride has not had time to develop in them, nor do they yet feel the constraint produced by the legalism of nature or by the stumbling blocks of the lower impulses. They believe that everything is possible, and they take joy in all that is beautiful and good. The boundary between the natural and what transcends nature, between the narrowing of human vision and man's power to use his freedom to create and open up new paths and horizons, has not yet been fixed. Indeed, children delight in these new horizons, but on the other hand they do have to be told about them. Taking into account this impulse that children have toward the good, toward the realm of faith, the Savior asked of adults only that they let the children come to Him and not impede them. This implies, however, that adults inform children about Christ. Jesus' words "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them" (Matt 19:14) also mean "Make Me known to the children!"

A child's ability to be in communion with Christ on the basis of the faith of those closest to him also demonstrates the fact that adults can share in the gifts of Christ through the faith of others, as in the raising of Jairus' daughter, the healing of the sick child or servant (παῖς) at Capernaum, and other similar cases. The contribution of those who are near to the salvation of their neighbors is so necessary that, for example, the crippled man at the pool of Bethesda could not take advantage of the water's saving power because he had no one who could be the means of helping him—except Jesus Christ, who healed him in an exceptional way.

It is clear, when the Gospel made its way into the world for the first time, that it was the adults who had to be won over and urged to have themselves baptized. Hence the New Testament speaks directly of the baptism of adults. But when these adults were being baptized, their children were baptized with them as well. The general phrase used in Acts 16:33 of the jailer at Philippi, "And immediately he and all his [family] were baptized," certainly includes the children too. Similarly, "I [St. Paul] also baptized the household of Stephanas" (1 Cor 1:16). On the basis of the apostolic tradition close to him as the spiritual grandchild of St. John, St. Irenaeus declares that children (*parvulī, infantes*) are also baptized.[31]

To all this we should add that through everything that is communicated to the child, the Christian family also seeks to protect the child from all kinds of dangers and temptations toward evil and to give him the power to fight against them. Baptism is the decisive force that accustoms him to think of himself as a Christian and as duty-bound to act like one, by struggling against temptations before they can enslave him to evil habits. Here is the argument St. Gregory of Nazianzus proposes on behalf of baptizing children:

> Have you an infant child? Do not let sin get any opportunity, but let him be sanctified from his childhood; from his very tenderest age let him be consecrated by the Spirit. Do you fear the Seal on account of the weakness of nature? O what a small-souled mother, and of how little faith! Why, Anna even before Samuel was born [1 Sam 1:11] promised him to God, and after his birth consecrated him at once, and brought him up in the priestly habit, not fearing anything in human nature, but trusting in God.[32]

Circumcision, itself an image or type of baptism, was carried out on the eighth day for all male children in Old Testament times on the basis of the revelation given by the same God who was accomplishing the plan of salvation in stages. The Lord Himself was circumcised on the eighth day and on the fortieth day brought to the temple and "presented to the Lord" (Luke 2:21–22) as a model for all infants. On this occasion, He was blessed by the righteous Symeon, of whom the Scripture says, "And the Holy Spirit was upon him" (Luke 2:25). This benediction is likewise an imparting of the Holy Spirit upon the one who is blessed. Any argument against infant baptism would necessarily include our ceasing to give these blessings to children as well, and that would be absurd.

The Gospel says of John the Baptist, "So the child grew and became strong in spirit" (Luke 1:80), and this was clearly because he was raised in a house belonging to God and characterized by prayer, and because he had been circumcised and dedicated to God. In the same way, the infant Jesus "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52); from His human infancy He grew and possessed grace, for it was only as a man that He could have an infancy.

CHAPTER 3

CHRISMATION: "THE SEAL OF THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT"

A. The Link between Baptism and Chrismation

This mystery is so closely linked to the mystery of baptism that it would be possible to say that together they form a single whole with two distinct parts. It is a kind of continuation of baptism, and for this reason, unlike the other mysteries, it has no separate introduction[1] of its own within the liturgical rites of the Church. After the baptism and the clothing of the baptized person, the priest goes on to recite a prayer in which he asks God to make a further gift of the seal of the gift of the Holy and All-Powerful Spirit to the one newly illuminated through water and the Spirit. Then he anoints with holy chrism the principal organs of the one baptized and says, "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen."[2]

The close connection between chrismation and the mystery of baptism is also evident in the fact that after the anointing with holy chrism, the priest circles the *analogion* three times with the one newly baptized and chrismated, singing, "As many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia" (cf. Gal 3:27). The same connection is illustrated in the very act of anointing the newly baptized with the holy chrism; the priest says, "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit," but he does not make mention of the name of the one anointed, as he does in the case of all the other sacraments. This is considered to have happened already at the moment of his immersion in the water.

A further link between the two mysteries can be found in the prayer said by the priest, who, after asking that the one "newly illuminated through water and the Spirit" be vouchsafed the grace of "being born anew" and receiving as well "the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit," goes on to ask, "Keep him (*her*) in your sanctification; confirm him (*her*) in the Orthodox faith; deliver him (*her*) from the Evil One and all his devices. And guard his (*her*) soul, through redeeming fear of You, in purity and uprightness, so that pleasing You in every word and deed, he (*she*) may become a child and heir of Your heavenly kingdom."[3] The petition is, therefore, that through the gifts received in baptism, the one born anew may be protected and strengthened in a twofold way: first, in the struggle against the Evil One whose desire it will be to deprive the newly baptized of these gifts; and second, in the keeping of the promise he has made to preserve the faith professed at his baptism and the state of purity and righteousness in which he was established.

The preservation of these gifts, however, demands effort. That is why Nicholas Cabasilas says that through the holy chrism, the powers given to a man through baptism become activated: "It would be fitting, then, that those who are thus spiritually created and begotten should obtain an energy suitable to such a birth, and a corresponding animation. This the sacred rite of the most divine chrism accomplishes for us. It activates the spiritual energies, one in one man, another in another, or even several at the same time, depending on how each man is prepared for this mystery."[4]

The Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemann sees the connection between chrismation and baptism not so much in the idea that chrismation activates the powers received in baptism as in the relationship between life and birth. He says,

> In the Orthodox Church, what we call today the second sacrament of initiation—that of chrismation (or confirmation)—has always been an integral part of the baptismal Liturgy. For it is not so much another sacrament as the very fulfillment of baptism, its "confirmation" by the Holy Spirit. It can be distinguished from baptism only insofar as life can be distinguished from birth. The Holy Spirit *confirms* the whole life of the Church because He is that life, the manifestation of the Church as the "world to come," as the joy and peace of the Kingdom . . . Confirmation is thus the personal Pentecost of man, his entrance

> into the new life in the Holy Spirit, which is the true life of the Church. It is his ordination as truly and fully man, for to be fully man is precisely to belong to the Kingdom of God.[5]

But this new life reveals itself as the power to preserve and grow in the state of baptismal purity and in the good works that are meant to be developed through the virtues, which find their highest expression in love. It is not merely a feeling of euphoria; it is a steadfastness in thought and good deeds, an authentic living of the universal priesthood by which the baptized offer their lives as a gift to God.

St. Cyril of Alexandria gives expression to this identification of the life given us through chrismation with the universal priesthood—that is, the activity toward the good that we are meant to carry out—when he says,

> By washing Aaron with water, he [Moses] dresses him with the holy cloak of the priestly office [Exod 29:1-9]. Likewise for us, after being washed in baptism and renouncing all uncleanness, we have been enriched with the grace from heaven above and received the cloak of gladness according to the words "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ" [Rom 13:14] . . . In the same way priests were consecrated by being washed with water and anointed with oil, then they were dressed with consecrated garments and their hands were sanctified so that they may be worthy to offer sacrifices purely and without blemish. But their heads were anointed beforehand according to the words "You anoint my head with oil" [Ps 23:5]. In the same way our minds were enriched by the granting of the Spirit . . . and we have been sanctified and adorned with the grace from above and have been anointed for the divine perfection so that we may courageously offer to God our spiritual gift with pure and unblemished hands.[6]

Christians, because they have been anointed like Christ, or have participated in His anointing, are priests too. But first of all, the priest is purified in mind and hands, that is, in the source of his thoughts and in the means whereby these thoughts are given their fulfillment, and then he is given the power of the Spirit that enables him to be active, clean in mind and hands, in the work of bringing to God the sacrifices of thoughts and good deeds for the benefit of the Church and of his fellow men.

With regard to the universal priesthood received by the faithful through the mystery of chrismation, St. Macarius of Egypt says, "Men consecrated through anointing become Christians so that they may become kings, priests, and prophets of the heavenly mysteries."[7]

Through this mystery, the one united through baptism with the Church in Christ moves from a union that to some degree is potential to an actual union. This is a new step forward in strengthening the unity of the Church in Christ.

B. The Special Activity of the Holy Spirit in the Mystery of Chrismation

Chrismation inaugurates an epiphany or manifestation of Christ in the conduct of the one who has been baptized. This epiphany shows forth the light of the Spirit of Christ shining upon the baptized person's being; it shows him to be the active image and living dwelling place of Christ, for chrismation helps the one baptized to make the image that has been imprinted upon him as a potentiality into something real and active. Accordingly, it can be said that through chrismation it becomes apparent to us that we will actualize the gifts we received in baptism not only through the strength of our own powers but also with the help of the Spirit. This help begins immediately after baptism.

If we did not have the help of the Spirit actively assisting us, we would be able to activate our baptismal gifts only with great difficulty, or indeed not at all. If the Spirit were not in continuous communication with us—a communication that began with the mystery of chrismation—it would hardly be possible for us to develop our life in God. In fact, our dialogue with God implies the activity of both partners and a continuous active communication between both in the Holy Spirit.

In the same way that the death of the old man through the birth of the new in baptism is not just a "given," static in character, but is something filled with endless possibilities, so the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is the beginning of His continuous descent upon and for the sake of each person who enters into the Church and remains within her. This descent represents the setting in motion and, through a reciprocal communion, the maintaining in movement of that death and birth in which we have participated at our baptism.

In affirming the idea that baptism is completed by chrismation, St. Cyril of Jerusalem goes so far as to say that the one baptized is hardly to be called a "Christian" before he receives chrismation: "Having been counted worthy of this holy chrism, you are called Christians, verifying the name also by your new birth. For before you were deemed worthy of this grace, you had properly no right to this title, but were advancing on your way towards being Christians."[8] What St. Cyril declares here is explained by the fact that at that time baptism was neither envisaged nor celebrated as a sacrament separate from the sacrament of chrismation; it was later in the Christian West that this began to be the case. On the other hand St. Cyril's statement also implies that for him no distinction can be made between the quality of being a member of the Church, in other words, a Christian, and of being a person completely united with Christ, something that occurs through chrismation. Through the holy mystery of chrismation, the believer himself becomes another Christ, becomes the likeness of Christ—which after all means the "Anointed" (*Christos*)—and hence he is also an anointed one, or a Christian (*christianos*).

In the Old Testament, the anointing with oil was considered to be the means of imparting certain divine powers to prophets, priests, and kings for the purpose of maintaining the people within the divine covenant. Christ is the Anointed One *par excellence* because, as man, He receives not just a power from the Spirit but the whole of the Spirit as hypostasis, so that He may be the supreme Prophet, High Priest, and King. He is all this so that He may introduce the people of God within the divine familiarity and maintain them there as a people built up from the sons of God in Christ the Son, and so that He may lead them to the fullness of life in the Spirit of God's love and in God's love, lived for all eternity. St. Cyril of Jerusalem says that after Jesus was baptized and came up out of the water, "the Holy Ghost in the fullness of His being lighted on Him, like resting upon like."[9]

Christ was thus anointed with the fullness of the Spirit, but by applying to Himself a passage from Isaiah (61:1–2), He Himself both announces and interprets this anointing as His being sent as man to act in the service of God and for the sake of the salvation of men: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18–19).

Another witness to Christ's anointing with the Spirit, for the sake of the service and activity that He undertook, is provided by the community in Jerusalem and the Apostle Peter, who says the following, among other things, in the testimony he gave about Jesus to Cornelius: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil" (Acts 10:38).

A consequence of Christ's indwelling at baptism in those who believe is that they too participate in the anointing with His Spirit, an anointing whose purpose is to strengthen them in the new life and to seal them in it. St. Paul gives witness to this understanding of the event from the very beginning of the Church's life: "Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee" (2 Cor 1:21–22). To Paul's testimony we can add that of St. Peter: "Let every one of you be baptized . . . and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38), and a later passage in the Acts of the Apostles that says that Peter and John, sent by all the apostles in Jerusalem, laid their hands on those whom the Deacon Philip had baptized "and they received the Holy Spirit" (see Acts 8:15–17). The example of the Lord and the practice of the apostles can be considered sufficient proof that this mystery was instituted by the Lord Himself.

Following the example of the Lord, we too have Christ within us as we come up out of the water of baptism, although He is not yet visibly resting upon us. Hence the Spirit of Christ immediately descends upon us, or shines forth from Christ within us, in order to show that we too are sons of God, but also in order that we too, with His help, might confirm this sonship of ours through our subsequent actions, just as Christ did after His own baptism. With the help of the Spirit whom we have received, we begin immediately to activate the quality we now possess of being teachers and prophets of God's Kingdom, priests who bring the offering of ourselves and of nature as a sacrifice to God, and kings reigning over our own nature and the nature of the world, so that we may never again be mastered by the world or led to use our natural powers in a way that pursues only our own passions and denies our freedom. If the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Christ as man occurs at the same moment as the reopening of the heavens before the Second Adam, and they remain open eternally—or are opened in a fuller way than they were even for Adam before the Fall—then through the anointing with the holy chrism, itself full of the Holy Spirit, the open heavens are revealed to every baptized person, because he is united with Christ. Now there is no longer any boundary separating the life of the creature who is united with Christ from the heavenly order of the Spirit. For just as after the Incarnation the Father acknowledged His Son, even as man, as His own Son in a visible manner—that is, by the act of sending down the Holy Spirit upon Him—so He also acknowledges us who have united ourselves with Christ in baptism; He bestows this quality of sonship upon us by anointing us with the Holy Spirit and by giving us the help we need to show that we are in fact His sons. Accordingly, through the descent of the Spirit upon us, we too have the heavens opened for us, that is, the mysteries of the endless life to come that transcend the laws of nature. This occurs within a process of discovery that is actualized for us in stages and in which we will share fully in the life to come, and within this process we can give prophetic testimony to the coming of that life in its fullness, and we all can interpret the experience of its promise, in the same way that the apostles prophesied at Pentecost. We can show, through the new life we lead, that even in our very nature we are prophets of the life to come. With the coming of Christ and the reception of His Spirit, it has been revealed to men that a life limited within the boundaries of nature and the present age—a life that ends in death—is not all there is. The light and the power of the eternal life to come in the Spirit have burst forth from within it, and the revelation of the end of this age has begun. St. Peter spoke of all this on the day when the Holy Spirit descended: "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy'" (Acts 2:16–18).

In general, the Holy Spirit, who is received in the mystery of chrismation, is the point of loving communication between us and the Father, a communication that is eternally new and always growing. This is what is meant by the "heavens opened" and the quality of being "sons" that the Spirit communicates to us. In this way, He bestows upon us a filial sensitivity that becomes more and more delicate within our relationship to the Father, as well as the sense that we are brothers in God with our fellow men. The Spirit, who bears the paternal love of the Father before the Son and who has become the bearer of that same love between the Father and Christ as man, also makes Himself, for our sake in Christ, the bearer of that same love and sensitivity that are characterized both by ardor and by gentleness. Only thus does He set in motion, in a continually ascending way, the powers that we have received in baptism in order to fulfill the will of the Father; to this end the Spirit makes us come alive by means of our wills and—also through our wills—impresses ever more deeply the image of the Son upon the whole of our being, causing us to love the Father as the Son does and making us, like Him, obedient to the Father. In this sense the Spirit received in this sacrament makes us holy. In this same way, however, the personal image of the human being becomes clearer and clearer, more luminous, and casts off the general haze of nature and mere potentiality. For the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of power.

It can be seen in the Acts of the Apostles that the mystery of anointing with holy chrism inaugurates for Christians a continuous and ever-increasing cooperation between themselves and the Holy Spirit. This cooperation has as its purpose the development of the new life received at baptism and therefore means that Christians devoted to Christ are living a perpetual Pentecost, a continuous participation in His Spirit. When the Jerusalem community, after thanking God for having anointed His Son Jesus, asked Him to give them the strength to speak the word "with all boldness," the immediate result of this, even before the prayer was finished, was that "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness" (see Acts 4:27–31).

The Christian West, under the influence of that same division of a human life into exact and rational stages that has led some Christian denominations to postpone baptism until an age when people may be said to have their own individual consciousness—although "individualistic" might be a better term here—has also postponed "confirmation" (as it is called) to the beginning of the age of adolescence, a time when the human being can in fact begin—or so they say—to enroll as a soldier on behalf of Christ. This overlooks the fact that, even prior to adolescence, a child, from the store of spiritual beauty that he possesses according to the image of Christ within him, can cause Christ to shine forth all around him. Indeed, who can name the precise moment when there begins within us that cooperation between our own human nature and the activity of God whose purpose is to penetrate the whole course of its development and thus make Christ known in the midst of those with whom we live? Is it not true that this dialogue between the human being and Christ begins already at a stage hidden from the eyes of the mature, because it begins from the earliest phases of childhood, when a child does not possess an advanced language in order to express what he experiences? Does not the child of God pray in a way that is often purer than that of the adult? Is he not set aflame against the force of evil by the impulse of holiness and by a wonderful purity? Is the child's enthusiasm for the good not very much greater than that of many of those who are mature? Does a child not need help from the time that he is small in order to develop good habits? And what would be the result if we avoided providing such promptings, which we feel we have to provide so that a child may acquire good habits? And if we think that urging a child forward in this way is necessary and useful, it means that the child is, in fact, able to put it to use. Roman Catholics now give Holy Communion to children around the age of seven, therefore before confirmation, because it seemed hard to put off the reception of Communion until the child had been confirmed at about the age of fourteen.[10]

C. The Meaning of the Visible Act of Chrismation

To the visible act of this mystery belong *the chrism*, *the anointing with it*, and the words "*the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit*." The chrism with which the one baptized is anointed is the kind of fluid that penetrates and lingers much more within the baptized person than water does, and it also imparts a fragrance.

The absorption of the chrism within the body signifies that the condition of the new man's birth is being assimilated. Its lingering is a sign that the Holy Spirit remains in an ongoing communion with the one baptized, while the fragrance it lends to him means that the Spirit becomes so closely connected to the one baptized that the Spirit's activity and quality become an activity and quality proper to the Christian himself. Yet these realities do not come to exist without constant effort on the part of the one baptized, aided as he is by the Spirit whom he has received. Where this effort is present, the chrism is absorbed within the body, the body grows pliable and loses its rigidity, it allows itself to be penetrated by God, and man and Spirit become a single font of the fragrance of the new life, and hence of that very life itself.

The good odor that disseminates from the one imbued with chrism makes it plain, however, that the Spirit is causing the Christian to fill everything around him with the fragrance of his purified life and nature, filled as it now is with that goodness and kindness that the Spirit, represented symbolically as a dove, has breathed upon him. The fragrance of the believer fills the Church and spreads out into the human community. Through the medium of the Christian's humanity, the Spirit manifests His own power of expansion and the force of a goodness that is gentle, delicate, and innocent, a force to bring all men into unity within the good, a force that the Spirit makes His own and in which Christ, who has perfected human nature in the highest degree, is also found.

For all these reasons, the New Testament portrays chrismation and the fragrance of the Spirit as states of being, states with a certain consistency but also full of a dynamism that, in Christians, has its focus in their efforts toward innocence and generosity. Through these states the very effects of baptism are shown to be persistent and dynamic. With regard to the permanence of the full power shining forth from the Spirit in Christians, St. Paul says, "Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing" (2 Cor 2:14–15).

According to the vision of St. Cyril of Alexandria, this good odor that Christians, who are found in Christ, spread—or indeed that Christ Himself spreads in them through the Spirit—is connected with the sacrificial state that Christians live out in Christ. The sacrificial state, however, has a double character: it is the state of the death of the old, sinful man, but it also represents the state of life with Christ in purity and loving activity. The Spirit activates in the Christian those states that have been established within him by Christ, who, through baptism, has set up His dwelling place within the believer:

> Christ, who according to the Scriptures "committed no sin" [1 Pet 2:22], offers Himself to God the Father on behalf of the

> Church as a sweet fragrance. That is why He said, "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself" [John 17:19]. He said "I sanctify Myself" instead of "I offer Myself as an unblemished sacrifice to God and the Father." For it is said that He surrenders Himself to God.[11]
>
> He is Himself the holy sacrifice that imparts the good fragrance through the virtues . . . It is He who sanctifies by anointing with the Holy Spirit those who entered into communion with Him.[12]
>
> According to His likeness, we too are sanctified sacrifices as the ones who have died to sin, because sin has been destroyed in us and we live for God the life of holiness.[13]

To designate this lingering or abiding of the Spirit within us, St. John the Apostle uses the term "anointing," and, among its various effects, places particular emphasis on knowledge. He is clearly thinking here of the knowledge that is based on experience and that simultaneously urges us to act so as to make this same knowledge known to others. If, in baptism, Christ takes up His dwelling within us in a hidden manner, one that eludes our awareness,[14] through chrismation we assume the power that moves us to action, and these acts make us feel the presence of Christ and even reveal Christ Himself, within us. Indeed, these same acts toward which the Spirit impels and assists us imply an awareness of the presence of Christ within us: "But you have an anointing from the Holy One [who is the Spirit], and you know all things" (1 John 2:20); and "But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him" (1 John 2:27). What St. John says here to the early Christians, that they do not need anyone to teach them, is not intended to be the basis for any kind of individualistic pride; it is meant instead to assure them that in spiritual matters they have no need to be taught by those who stand outside the Spirit of Christ. For inside the Church all share in communicating with one another their experiences of life in the Spirit, and these experiences are verified both in the light of the Church's teaching, which has been preserved in its wholeness from the very beginning, and also in a special way by the preaching and ministry provided by the hierarchy and the liturgical priesthood. Activity carried out on behalf of Christ, an activity empowered in us by the mystery of chrismation, points to the exercise of a universal priesthood, evident in the writings of St. Cyril of Alexandria cited above. Hence the Christian too is anointed, like Christ.

The mystery of chrismation's meaning as the strengthening of the one baptized so that he can develop the new life in cooperation with the Holy Spirit finds its clearest expression in the custom of anointing all the principal members of the newly baptized person's body, especially the sense organs, with the holy chrism. It is through these members and organs that a human being comes into contact with the world and, through the world, with God too. Through them he receives created things, but it is also through them that he sees God in the world, and, based on this vision of God, the believer exercises his own action upon the world in order to bring it more into keeping with God's will. St. Cyril of Jerusalem gives special emphasis to all this when he says, "And you were first anointed on the forehead, that you might be delivered from the shame, which the first man who transgressed bore about with him everywhere; and that *with unveiled face you might reflect as a mirror the glory of the Lord*" (2 Cor 3:18).[15] We might say more precisely that through this gesture of anointing, the Spirit is imprinted upon the human being's mind and opens up for him the limitless horizons of light and goodness so that he may know and think only good things, and, by fighting against the evil things that seek to narrow his horizons, so that he may enter with ease into the eternal mysteries of the knowledge and love of God. "Then [you were anointed] on your ears, that you might receive the ears which are quick to hear the Divine Mysteries, of which Isaiah said, *The Lord gave me also an ear to hear* [Isa 50:4]; and the Lord Jesus in the Gospel, *He who has ears to hear, let him hear*" [Matt 11:15]."[16] The Spirit is imprinted on the ears to serve as an extraordinary power of hearing or comprehending the deepest spiritual meanings of words. The ears are not to linger among words that are ugly and hateful, among ideas and words lacking in all depth and purity. They are to be open only to words that are clean, and to take hold of only what is deep and pure within these words, so that any impulse toward the good that is found within them can penetrate us through our organs of hearing.

The one who has received baptism is then anointed on the nostrils. Here the intention is that the nostrils are not to be opened to the odors that might tempt us to evil. After that the chest is anointed "that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil . . . having put on the breastplate of righteousness" (Eph 6:11, 14), that is, the breastplate of the virtues that represent such courageous and brave habits in the pursuit of the good. "For as Christ after His Baptism, and the visitation of the Holy Spirit, went forth and vanquished the adversary, so likewise you, after Holy Baptism and the Mystical Chrism, having put on the whole armor of the Holy Spirit, are to stand against the power of the adversary, and vanquish it, saying, *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me* [Phil 4:13]."[17] The chest represents power, but it also stands for the heart and its feelings. The seal of the Spirit imprinted here makes these feelings of the heart pure, generous, sympathetic, loving toward God and neighbor, joyful, and far removed from sadness, envy, and enmity.

Afterward, the believer is anointed on the hands and the feet so as to be ready to carry out the good anytime and to hurry to the aid of those who need help, to run to fulfill the appeals that come to him from God, who asks His faithful to do good and to avoid evil.

St. Cyril of Alexandria says in turn, "Christ has implanted in us a sense of hearing full of blessing, [a sense of hearing] that is attentive and easy to direct, as well as able to receive the dogmas regarding God; it is a sense of hearing that does not tolerate whispers and disgusting talk . . . We gain all special gifts in Him and through Him. That is the reason why the hand was also consecrated as a tool for the saving work, and the leg as visible symbol of walking into righteousness. For we are to enrich ourselves with good deeds and to walk on the path leading to all things pleasing to God"[18] (cf. Ps 119:59; Prov 4:26; Heb 12:13).

Through chrismation the Holy Spirit penetrates and imprints Himself upon these physical members and organs, and on the spiritual powers on which they are founded; also, in the same way as the holy chrism, the Spirit abides in them as a pleasing fragrance. He imprints Himself as a seal not only on the outside of these members but also on their interiors, and so provides human beings with a unified spiritual image. The word "seal," therefore, has the twofold meaning of strengthening and of imprinting, and the two meanings are thus connected. The Spirit imparts strength inasmuch as He imprints Himself and accentuates within human beings a characteristic personal image, which is at the same time a spiritual image. The human being grows stronger through his pneumatization; he becomes a person set firmly in what is good, not easily susceptible to change.

In every spiritual and bodily member of the believer, the Spirit produces an effect, or imprints a power that grows according to the nature of each member. Some persons, however, are more active through the agency of certain members than they are through the others—some through the intelligence, for example, others through feeling, and others through some other type of activity—but the Spirit produces a special gift in each one according to the measure in which one or another of the person's members has received a more powerful strengthening. Consequently, in each member of the Church, the Spirit has brought a special gift into being. But this process also implies that all the members of the entire body receive a strengthening. Hence, at the anointing of each of the members, the same phrase is recited: "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit." For in all these special gifts, the same Spirit is active, together with the entirety of the believer, although the believer will be more active especially through that one particular member. Thus on one hand the single grace of baptism is put to work in the different gifts of the Spirit, but on the other hand in an individual believer one or even several gifts will develop in a distinctive way, in accordance with his own natural predispositions: "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord . . . But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all . . . For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body . . . For in fact the body is not one member but many" (cf. 1 Cor 12:4–7, 13–14; Rom 12:4–6). Thus the distinction of gifts must not serve in a negative way to introduce divisions among the faithful or to inflate the pride of some by comparison to others or by subjugating others to themselves; rather, its purpose is positive: to promote reciprocal complementarity and to strengthen the Church as the unified body of the Lord. To the extent that the others have need of my gift, to the same extent I have need of their gifts. The distinction of gifts must be the foundation, therefore, for a reciprocal love and appreciation among the faithful, for a zeal on the part of each to discover the uniqueness of the others' gifts, and for a responsibility before all the rest.

Through this anointing of the principal members and organs of the senses, we can see the importance that the Church accords—or, through the Church, that Christ accords—to the human body, an importance that Christ manifested through His Incarnation. It is through the body that a man's life as a whole is enriched and oriented either toward good or toward evil, and it is through the body that the Holy Spirit is communicated to him, for the body is pierced by sensations, and it is through this sensibility that the soul and the mind are able to open themselves up and give themselves to God. Consequently, God Himself works through human sensibility and communicates Himself through it, and without the sanctification of His body there can be no sanctification of the human being. Indeed, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the body of the Lord as well, and from Christ the Spirit shines forth upon our bodies.

In the West it is customary for this sacrament to be celebrated through the laying on of hands by the bishop, after the example of Acts 8:15–17, where the Apostles Peter and John impart the Holy Spirit through the imposition of hands upon those whom the Deacon Philip has recently baptized in Samaria. In the East it has been a legacy from apostolic times, on the basis of the various passages cited above, to celebrate this sacrament by the anointing with holy chrism. This practice also has the advantage of making it possible for the priest to celebrate the chrismation immediately after baptism, because today bishops are more remote from the local communities than priests are; moreover, the same passage in Acts shows Peter and John also celebrating the sacrament shortly after baptism. Nevertheless, the Eastern practice also leaves the episcopate a role to play in the celebration of this mystery, for the chrism that the priest uses to anoint the baptized is itself always consecrated by the assembly of bishops of one of the autocephalous Churches. This manifests the unity or sobornicity of the Church in the Spirit of Christ, just as on the day of Pentecost it was upon the entire apostolic body gathered together that the Holy Spirit descended. Moreover, anointing provides a more adequate image for this imprinting of the Holy Spirit separately upon each spiritual and bodily member and organ of the human being, and for the abiding presence of this imprinting.

The role that the Orthodox Church accords in this mystery to the bishops considered as a body can be seen in the fact that the same Holy Spirit who communicates Himself to every believer is always the Church's Spirit whose descent occurs through the invocation that is made by the episcopate as a whole. Hence the Spirit of the whole Church descends on each of the faithful. It is into the entire Church that each believer is introduced, so that through his own special gift the Church in her totality can be enriched and helped, just as the Church in her totality sustains and promotes this special gift of each of the faithful. Only in the total unity of the Church can each believer be saved and perfected. Only in this total Church can he activate the totality of his own powers, strengthened by the Holy Spirit, even though some of these powers are more pronounced in some believers, and others in other believers. In the celebration of chrismation, the presence of this total Church—together with her contribution to the strengthening of each of her members in the Holy Spirit—thus is more apparent than in baptism. For whoever receives the Holy Spirit through chrismation manifests more effectively his contribution to the life of the whole Church, because the new life he received in baptism is actualized through his good deeds, while at the same time the Church herself is contributing more effectively to the actualization and development, through good deeds, of the new life that belongs to each believer. For human beings cannot work effectively if they lack a milieu in which to work, one that stimulates and helps them to this end, because each one makes use of the work of each of the others. Therefore, because the Holy Spirit who is imparted in this sacrament helps human beings in the development of certain special gifts, He promotes their distinctive personal characters; however, because He is the Spirit of the Church as a whole, a person cannot develop as a person except within the community of the Church, benefitting from her help and working for her sake.

Finally, it should also be noted that this mystery, because of the close relationship it has with that of baptism, is not celebrated a second time.

CHAPTER 4

THE DIVINE EUCHARIST: THE MYSTERY OF THE LORD'S BODY AND BLOOD

A. The Relationship between the Three Mysteries of Initiation

Baptism, chrismation, and the Eucharist are the three mysteries through which those who believe in Christ are united fully with Him or are introduced fully within the Church. They are the three *mysteries of initiation*. If chrismation gives power to develop the new life in Christ received through baptism, it is through the Eucharist that this life is perfected as full union with Christ and the Church. If baptism is the mystery of the beginning, and chrismation of the middle, then the Eucharist is the mystery of the end, of perfection. Certainly, the new member of the Church, although he receives the Eucharist immediately after baptism and chrismation, is not to be thought of as having reached perfection from the point of view of what he himself must contribute. Nevertheless, he possesses within himself, in a concentrated form, the entire path he must follow in Christ. This path sets out from baptism and must continue to advance. This occurs through the contribution that the human being himself makes, and also through the use he makes of the force he is given so that he may continue along the whole length of the path, until he reaches that state which crowns his efforts to develop the new life received in these three mysteries. This final state must always imprint itself on human beings as the image of Christ in its full potentiality, present already in them through Holy Communion for the purpose of attracting them toward this final image and effecting their ever-closer assimilation to it. Perfection must be lived by way of anticipation or experienced beforehand in a way that is continuously renewed, but on the other hand it must remain as a future goal that draws men toward itself.

The Eucharist is the mystery that crowns baptism and chrismation as the fullness of the new life and power, a fullness that was initiated potentially through baptism and has within itself the virtual power that is developed through chrismation. The Eucharist possesses in its very nature the power of dying completely to any existence separated from God; this power is first sown in baptism and then developed through chrismation.

In baptism the one who believes in Christ dies to sin, or to the old man, and, from the death of Christ, takes power to live along with Christ a life of obedience to God. In this death of the old man, however, another kind of death is also included: that of surrendering one's own existence to God. The former death cannot exist without the latter, and it is the Eucharist that makes us capable of this latter kind of death. Our earthly existence is maintained after baptism so that, through the virtues, it can be renewed and developed as life in Christ, because, in that life, it possesses both these kinds of death. Now, the power to live this life in Christ and to die both these kinds of death is taken not only from the Christ who was born undefiled and who died for our sins but also from the Christ who died surrendering Himself to the Father in order to rise again to eternal life. The death to sins and the power to live the new life received in baptism both develop from the power of the Spirit of Christ and from the power of the life of Christ after His birth and baptism, together with the reception of the Holy Spirit through baptism and chrismation. They develop also from His death for our sins, because the surrender that we make of ourselves to God—received through the Eucharist—and that leads us toward resurrection comes both from the death of Christ as surrender to the Father and also from His Resurrection.

In the Eucharist, the human being, reborn in Christ and strengthened through the Holy Spirit, is no longer united with the Christ who is born and dies for our sins but with the Christ who dies at the end of all His activity in order to rise to eternal life.

The Eucharist thus establishes in us the power to surrender our existence wholly to God in order to receive it back filled with His eternal life, as Christ did through the Resurrection. The Eucharist is not so much intended for a renewed life on earth, in the likeness of Christ's earthly life, as it is for the life to come. It presupposes that man has progressed or will progress beyond a renewed life on earth—a life that he will realize by drawing on the power of baptism and chrismation—into an eternal life, that is, a life beyond the life that has established itself firmly in the purity received at baptism and in the virtues of the power of the mystery of holy chrism, hence beyond a life sheltered from sin into eternal life. For sins committed after baptism and chrismation, pardon is generally obtained through the mystery of penance. If it is also said that the Eucharist exists for the forgiveness of sins and not exclusively for the sake of the life to come, this is because these sins are those that have continued to remain hidden from our consciousness and have not been able to be forgiven in the sacrament of penance on the basis of confession. *The Eucharist is given principally for the sake of eternal life, and hence for the purpose of raising us above life on earth.*

But the plane of eternal life is not merely superimposed over the plane of a renewed earthly life; it also interacts with it, and the two support one another mutually. Therefore, the Eucharist is given not only at the end of life on earth, or after someone has achieved an earthly life established firmly in the good. Eternal life—or rather, Christ with His eternal life—strengthens the movement of our own earthly life toward life eternal, not only as a promise but as a foretaste of what it is to come. It thus sustains the renewal of our earthly life in its purity and virtues, and the Eucharist serves also in this way as a help to our life on earth so that we can progress toward eternal life.

The Eucharist is the force of a magnetic agent at work upon our earthly life that attracts it toward this force; it is the pole star guiding the ark of our life through the waves of earthly existence; it is the leaven or yeast that transforms our life on earth gradually into eternal life. The new life through baptism, which follows upon the death of the old man, cannot exist without the promise and foretaste of the life eternal, which is sustained by the Eucharist. Hence the Eucharist is given immediately after baptism and chrismation. The new life on earth would be meaningless and powerless without the perspective and pledge of the resurrection.

St. Paul says, "Therefore we were buried with Him by baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection" (Rom 6:4–5). He also says, "[We are] always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body . . . knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus" (2 Cor 4:10, 14).

If the testimony of the apostles gives us the awareness of the Resurrection of Christ as a new, external fact and the assurance that if Christ has risen we too will rise again, the Eucharist in turn makes us possess within ourselves the Resurrection of Christ as a power that leads us toward resurrection and causes us to experience it already, to a certain degree, by anticipation. But if through the Eucharist we have in ourselves Christ, who died and rose, then through Him we also prepare ourselves for our own real death, a death that, in Christ, we will transcend—or indeed have already spiritually transcended—through the foretaste of His Resurrection and its working within us. Thus the Eucharist gives us not only the power to die to sin and to surrender ourselves to God but also the power to accept our real death when it comes, without any fear or doubt regarding our eternal existence, just as Christ accepted His death as a gift and offered it to the Father. The Eucharist gives us the power to die when we must, not only according to the likeness of the death of Christ but also, like Him, in reality, because the pledge of that eternal life to which we will pass over is already at work within us. United with Christ in the Eucharist, we have no more fear of death, for we bear in ourselves the risen body of Christ as the remedy or antidote of immortality or of eternal incorruption, which was the name the Fathers gave to the Eucharist. "He who feeds on Me will live because of Me," said the Savior (John 6:57); "He who eats this bread [that came down from heaven] will live forever" (John 6:58); and "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:54). For "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him" (John 6:56). Whoever possesses in himself through the Eucharist the Christ who died but is risen can say with St. Paul, "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" (1 Cor 15:55).

Saint Eutychius, patriarch of Constantinople (553–557), made distinctions between the mystical sacrifice of the Lord at the Last Supper, the real death of Christ that occurred afterward, and the completion and perfection of His mystical death that began on the day of the Resurrection. We realize the first mystical death of Christ in baptism, and the second death occurs, with or without martyrdom, in our own actual death. But the completed and perfected Paschal mystery, which St. Eutychius gives us to understand as connected to the Eucharist, is effected in us on the day of the Resurrection.[1]

The Church, however, paying attention to the real content of the words of the Mystical Supper, considers the Paschal meal not as a type of baptism, or not only a type of baptism, but also of the Eucharist. Perhaps Patriarch Eutychius considers the Mystical Supper as a type of baptism without excluding consideration of it as a type of the Eucharist, inasmuch as in baptism too there takes place a mystical death, and hence baptism is a kind of anticipation of the Eucharist. But inasmuch as the Mystical Supper is a sensible, anticipatory image of the full mystical death of the Lord after the Resurrection—and hence also an image of the Eucharist as a sensible representation of this death—the Mystical Supper is principally and properly the first Eucharist. For inasmuch as the real death of Christ, which follows, is prepared by His mystical death in the Mystical Supper, the Eucharist is for us too a preparation for our actual death, a preparation that comes through the experience of our more pronounced mystical death in the Eucharist. But the Eucharist prepares us for more than this: it prepares us to transcend our own death in the reality of the Resurrection, and it prepares us more adequately to be partakers in that Christ who is found in the resurrected state and within that perfected mystical death that follows upon the Resurrection. For us this partaking and communion will occur when we too have risen again with Christ.

We must mention the fact that the mystical death in Christ, in which we become sharers in the Eucharist to a higher degree than in baptism, and which is to be understood as a preparation for our own actual death and for the fully mystical death that follows upon this, is not to be contrasted with the foretaste of resurrection that is inseparable from it in the Eucharist, whether this anticipation be that of the resurrection to a renewed earthly life or of that of the perfected state of resurrection that follows upon our actual death. The mystical death of being immersed in God (accompanied by a glorious sense of dissolving within Him that is not the nullification of our being, because we are able to experience this feeling) represents immersion in the infinite life, which is God, and hence our appropriation from it of a life that is immortal and completely fulfilling. The moment that we have passed through this mystical death in God is the moment when our person begins to realize itself completely, being filled with an endless and abiding life.

But the mystical death is found on various levels that are active before the time of our actual death, and so there is a similar anticipation of the resurrection that also advances in stages within us. We do not only die to and forget the old man through baptism but also through the subsequent repeated mystical deaths that we experience through our repeated moments of Eucharistic Communion. Through each Communion we produce a discontinuity with our past state and launch ourselves outward toward another new state, which is higher up and corresponds to the *epektasis* ("forward tension") spoken of by the Apostle Paul (Phil 3:13–14) and by St. Gregory of Nyssa. This discontinuity with our past state does not mean, however, that the very being of our personal identity is nullified, for resurrection to a higher state is possible because the shattering of our former state, as well as our leaving it behind to go out toward a new and higher state, is not produced by our being immersed within nothingness but within God, who is subject to no determination. And in God this absence of determination is not a reflection of a kind of void hostile to all life but rather a reflection of the infinity of His divine life.

St. Maximus the Confessor sees this same step-by-step progression between death with Christ (for which we receive power in baptism) and the much fuller mystical death (for which we receive power in the Eucharist): baptism gives us the power to die to the inclination of our will toward sin, whereas the Eucharist gives us the power to accept both our actual death and also the life that follows in the resurrection,[2] because through the Eucharist we appropriate the fuller mystical death and hence also the anticipation of the resurrection that is spoken of at the time of Holy Communion.

We possess this foretaste of the resurrection together with a certain indifference toward that death we all must pass through in company with Christ if we are also to rise with Him. From both of these

St. Paul draws the courage needed in order to endure the advances death makes upon our outer man: "Knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus . . . we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor 4:14, 16–17). The foretaste of the resurrection grows out of the process by which the dynamic state of resurrection is being imprinted, really and gradually, upon our inner man, and this dynamic state stems from the fact that the risen Christ is united with us.

Consequently, it is clear that the reason why the Eucharist imprints upon us this state of resurrection, by which we are to transcend the death that we must pass through, is so that we might enjoy the fullest possible union with Christ, for Christ has conquered death, having already passed through it, and now finds Himself within the perfected state of mystical death and resurrection. By the mysteries of baptism and chrismation, although Christ dwells in us with His death and Resurrection, He is only able to make His activity our own through the Holy Spirit, who gives us the power to die to the old man and to go forth from death toward a new life in an incomplete way. In the Eucharist, however, He unites Himself with us through His very body and blood, from which His own power shines forth. In the Eucharist we eat the body and drink the blood of the one who is dead, risen, and alive in the Spirit. The Eucharistic elements thus communicate their own quality to our body and blood, and in this way our body and blood become bearers not only of Christ but also of His mystical death in God and the foretaste of the resurrection, which work through His body and blood. Without a doubt, the body and blood of Christ remain His own personal body and blood. But they are prolonged in our body and blood inasmuch as these are brought within the framework of His body and blood and so take on their quality. Accordingly, alongside the personal body of the Lord, there also comes into being His extended body; no division is possible between the two bodies, given that the focal point of the extended body is the personal body of the Lord.

Hence the power of the mystical death of the body of Christ, and the power of His Resurrection and of His state of incorruptibility, becomes a more profound reality within our soul through the agency of our body and blood; this reality functions as a number of different powers that will be able to reconstitute our risen and incorruptible body at the general resurrection. Another fact will help in this process: the reason (*logos*) of the body of Christ, united hypostatically with the divine Logos, has fully imposed its power over the matter of His body and made it wholly spiritual, because that body is essentially a reason that has been given material form. Moreover, this same power extends gradually from the body of Christ into our bodies too, because its destiny is to extend itself completely at the resurrection not only over our bodies but also over the entire material world, and in this way it will render all the rational principles of creation transparent, or make all of creation wholly spiritual.

The union with the Lord in the Eucharist is a complete union precisely because He is no longer a worker in us only through the energy introduced into us by His Spirit but also through His body and His blood, imprinted upon our body and blood. Now, where His body and blood are, there is present also in a full manner the subject of these. Hence through the Eucharist Christ's own subject, as subject of His body and blood, makes Himself a direct subject of our body and blood, with which His body and blood are intimately united. Through this, His body and blood have given our own body and blood their divine qualities, imprinting themselves upon our own body and blood and uniting their divine activities and sensibility with the activities and sensibility of our body and blood. For inasmuch as each of us is also a subject of our body and blood, and of the activity that has penetrated us from the body and blood of Christ, we find ourselves subjects together with Christ of our body, become also His body, and of His body, become also our body. Ultimately, the life without death grows in us through the supreme and concrete intimacy into which we have entered. We remain and grow through the Eucharist with the divine Person of the Word, who has realized the potentiality of this intimacy with us and of the act of communicating His own divine life to our body through the human body He assumed, for His body was filled with this life through His actual death, through the victory over the death that He endured, and through the state of mystical death and resurrection. Through this intimacy and communication perfected in Him, we experience the states, feelings, and activities of Christ, and He experiences ours, penetrated and characterized by His own. "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20), said the Holy Apostle Paul. Ultimately, the full union between Christ and ourselves, realized through the Eucharist, is the testimony of His supreme love for us, and this is the basis of the mutual communication perfected between Him and us.[3]

The full union with Him into which Christ draws us when He prolongs His presence within us together with His body also implies that we are united with the rest of the faithful in whom Christ is doing the same thing. Hence the Eucharist is also the act of realizing and continually increasing the full unity of the Church, as the extended body of Christ; in this sense the Eucharist perfects the work that was begun in baptism and chrismation.[4]

Union with Christ in the Eucharist is the basis and the source of a total love among the members of the Church, for all its members are of the same body, not only with Christ but also among themselves. Each experiences and feels the life of all the others as a life illuminated by the mind of the same Christ, and the Spirit of the same Christ fills this life with sensitivity and power for good deeds. For not only are all related to one another, but they are also "fellow members of the same body" (σύσσωμα, Eph 3:6) with Christ and with one another, and this union is such that they no longer separate their interests, thoughts, and feelings, so long as all are also offering the contribution of their will. In their common sensation of dissolving within God, experienced as a kind of mystical death with Christ, as also in their anticipation of the risen state, no one distinguishes himself any longer from the others, although by the very fact that each one has his own experience of this sensation, even this anticipation proves that the personal existence of each one endures.

Thus *the Eucharist is par excellence the mystery of the unity of the Church.*

Those who participate together in Holy Communion already find themselves within a unity of faith, because, beginning long before, from the moment following their baptism, they have already been coparticipants in the same body and blood of the Lord. Hence even before the liturgical *anaphora* (the prayer that precedes the transformation of the gifts), all the faithful sing, "Let us love one another so that with one mind we may confess," and together they recite the Creed.

Then they receive Communion together so that this unity among them may grow. In the prayer of the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, after the transformation of the gifts into the body and blood of the Lord and before the Communion, the priest makes this petition on behalf of all: "And unite all of us to one another who become partakers of the One Bread and Cup in the communion of the same Holy Spirit."[5] Already in a text from the apostolic age, the *Teaching (Didache) of the Twelve Apostles*, the petition is made to God that those who communicate may be united in a way similar to the grains of wheat that have been brought together to make the Eucharistic bread: "Even as this broken *bread* was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Your kingdom."[6]

In the prayer that is prayed in the presence of the body and blood of the Lord, mention is made of all of the following: the living; the dead; human beings and angels; and, first among all of these, the Mother of the Lord. The Eucharist strengthens the communion that exists among all beings. This unity in the body of the Lord becomes a fact through the working of the Holy Spirit, who is invoked in the prayer of the *epiklesis*. It is the Spirit who acts in the transformation of the gifts and in Holy Communion, because the body of the Lord come down upon the altar is a body that has been made wholly spiritual, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of communion between Christ and ourselves, and also among all of us—in Christ.[7]

If, on the basis of an already existing unity, the Eucharist is the mystery of deeper unity within the same body and blood of Christ and in an identical faith and love, and if the Eucharist is also shared within Holy Communion of the Church so that her unity may be strengthened, then it is natural that the Eucharist not be given to those who find themselves outside the Church and who intend to remain outside her. For in that case, its deepest purpose would be frustrated.

The personal reality of each of the faithful is clearly not extinguished even by such a profound unity in Christ, for although the faithful all receive Communion together in a body, each one is called personally by his name: "The servant of God *N.* partakes of the body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

B. The Real Presence of the Lord's Body and Blood in the Eucharist

If, in the other mysteries, Christ is present invisibly through His activity, in the Eucharist He is present through His very body and blood in the forms of bread and wine. Through this sacrament He gives Himself completely to the members of the Church, that is, to the Church herself, because, inasmuch as Christ fulfills His intention of abiding within those who believe, He constitutes and upholds the Church completely as the extension of His own body.

Yet the Eucharist can fulfill this mission only if it means the real presence of Christ: Christ together with His body and blood in the forms of bread and wine, and Christ given so that we may receive Him inwardly. It is essential, therefore, to speak first of all about this presence.

The Eucharist is the fulfillment of the economy of salvation, of the economy of the love of God toward human beings and of His union with us. If the will of the Son of God was to come so close to men that He united Himself to them as the only way of saving and deifying them, He could not have been content that His Incarnation as man should have left Him separated and isolated from the rest of men. Instead, His intention was to go still further, to make Himself incarnate in all human beings, yet without preventing them from remaining distinct from Him as human persons and without ceasing to remain distinct as a Person Himself, so that He might practice love in its perfection. He must enter within us not just once but eternally; thus on one hand He must be present within us, but on the other hand He must remain distinct from us and above us. In this way, Christ can always enter within us to an ever-greater degree, seeking to grow continuously in His loving relationship with us and to feed that love which is also revealed by the union of our bodies with His immaculate body and blood. A friend, even if he has already become part of your interior reality because at one time he has made a gift of himself to you, continues to give himself to you always, causing his interior presence to grow in you.

St. John Chrysostom describes this reality in the following way: "For if He came to our nature, it is quite plain that it was to all; but if to all, then to each one . . . With each one of the faithful, He mingles Himself in the mysteries, and whom He begot, He nourishes by Himself, and does not set aside for another; by this He also persuades you again that He took on your flesh."[8]

Because love is Christ's only motive for taking on flesh, He does so in order that human beings may receive from Him the gift of God's true life. Those created by God cannot have life and cannot grow in it except in Him, for He is the source of life. Hence God causes them to be born anew. But God cannot abandon those who have been born from Him without feeding them with life from Himself. It may be that a human mother might give the child she has borne to some other woman to be nursed, because ultimately her own blood is no better than that of the other woman; but God, after He has established that human beings cannot abide eternally without being given a share in His own life, proceeds to feed them Himself, along with the divine life, so that they can grow in this life and abide eternally within it.

Thus *the Eucharist is the natural consequence of baptism.* If baptism is man's rebirth from Christ, the God-Man, then the Eucharist is man's nourishment from Christ. Both mysteries follow from the Incarnation, which is the sign of God's love for men.

Moreover, the true life, present in the blood of Christ, is also manifested in the purity of that same blood. Blood that is poisoned is blood moving toward decomposition. Hence "[He] Himself feeds us with His own blood, and by all means entwines us with Himself,"[9] for only His blood is immaculate.

The Savior Himself has assured us that He is really present in the Eucharist together with His body and blood; He has also assured us of the various meanings of this presence and explained how it is possible. He has based His presence on His own actions and has instituted and explained the Eucharist through His own words. At the Last Supper, Christ institutes the mystery of the Eucharist formally, both through words and by celebrating it Himself for the first time. On that occasion, "Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins'" (Matt 26:26–28). At the offering of the body, the Gospel of Luke adds the words "which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19). Mark gives only the words found in Matthew (Mark 14:22–23).

But it should also be observed that according to all three synoptic evangelists, the Savior also spoke the following words—according to Luke, immediately before the offering of His body and blood in the forms of bread and wine (Luke 22:18); and according to Matthew and Mark, immediately after (Matt 26:29; Mark 14:25): "I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Based on these words, and on the fact that Christ says, offering the bread, "This is my body which is given for you" (Luke 22:19) while saying when offering the chalice, "This is my blood . . . which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt 26:28), it is clear on one hand that the Eucharist is founded on the Savior's sacrifice on the cross, and on the other hand that His risen body and blood will be present in the Eucharist for all time to come. His Resurrection will make the wine new, and so too the Lord's blood, with which Christ, in this mystery, will communicate us in His Kingdom, a Kingdom that begins simultaneously with the Church. If Christ had not been crucified and had not risen, the Last Supper—the Mystical Supper—would not have been possible, nor the Eucharist in the Church. At the Last Supper, Christ experiences mystically, by anticipation, His death on the cross, but He also experiences the mystical death that occurs subsequently.

Clearly, for Christ to be crucified and to rise again, He must first become incarnate. The basis of the Eucharist, therefore, is Christ's taking of our body to Himself, His sacrifice for our sake, and His Resurrection. *The Eucharist of the Last or Mystical Supper is the mystical anticipation of the sacrifice on Golgotha and of the Resurrection. This is the proof that, at the Mystical Supper, Christ experienced His sacrifice and Resurrection in a mystical way,* just as He will experience them in the Eucharist of the Church, so as to imprint them on our body and blood as well.

Just as His sacrifice on the cross and His Resurrection were necessary for the institution of the Eucharist, so too was the Mystical Supper. Without it, the apostles would not have appropriated in a real way the mystical death and Resurrection of Christ, nor would we have appropriated them either; there would have been no passing over from the death of the Lord on Golgotha and from His Resurrection to our own experience of these realities, or rather to Christ's experience of them in us. Besides, had there been no Last Supper, we would not have known that the Lord instituted the Eucharist on the basis of His death and Resurrection, and that, through these, He abides with us and always makes His entry within us as the sacrificed and risen Lord.

Thus the Eucharist perpetuates the "remembrance" (*anamnesis*) of the fact that Christ became incarnate, offered Himself in sacrifice, and rose again. It also constitutes proof of this fact. But its "remembrance" is perpetuated as a fact that continues within us in a real way. This remembrance is a remembrance because Christ, who is incarnate, sacrificed, and risen, abides in union with us. This remembrance is linked to the remembrance of Christ's promise that He will abide in union with us as incarnate, sacrificed, and risen. Through the Eucharist we proclaim the news of the Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection of the Son of God as man, not as if these were only past events, nor as a reality that is repeated over and over again, but precisely as a reality that has been extended in us too on an invisible level. St. Paul transmits the Lord's command "Do this in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor 11:24) more insistently than does Luke his disciple, who certainly took it from Paul. For according to St. Paul, Jesus said these words after offering the body and blood, in order to draw the following conclusion: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Cor 11:26). But St. Paul shows that he understands this proclamation as an experience that, through our agency, continues Christ's death and Resurrection, because the central theme of St. Paul's preaching and letters is precisely that we experience in ourselves the death and the Resurrection of the Lord. The proclamation of the Lord's death and Resurrection becomes, through the Eucharist, not a theoretical announcement of a few facts from past history but the proclamation of the experience of certain realities that perpetuate themselves in us.

In the Eucharist Christ is really present with His body and blood, sacrificed and risen from the dead, and consequently only through the Eucharist can we ourselves die and rise again with Him; and only through this death and resurrection together with Christ do we become partakers of eternal life. If our salvation did not depend on this dying and rising together with Christ, then the presence of the Lord in us, with His sacrificed and risen body, would not be necessary, nor would the Eucharist thus be necessary. This is the reason why Protestantism—because of its theory that our salvation comes through a juridical act of expiation by Christ, who stands in our place—has done away with the teaching that Christ is present in the Eucharist, and, in any case, does not acknowledge Christ as present in the Eucharist in a state of sacrifice, whereas Catholicism never succeeds in giving a complete and clear explanation of the necessity of the Eucharist.

We can see in St. John Chrysostom and in St. Eutychius, patriarch of Constantinople, this presentation of the Eucharist as a continuing experience of these three moments: *the Last or Mystical Supper, the sacrifice on the cross, and the Resurrection*. The text of St. Eutychius has been given above, and his explanation shows that it was the ordinary explanation of the Eucharist in the period of the undivided Church. St. John Chrysostom says,

> Do you see how much diligence has been used, that it should be ever borne in mind that He died for us? For since the Marcionists, and Valentinians, and Manichaeans were to arise, denying this dispensation, He continually reminds us of the passion even by the mysteries . . . at once saving, and at the same time teaching by means of that sacred table . . . Then, when He had delivered it, He said, "I will not drink of the fruit of this wine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" [Matt 26:29]. Because He had discoursed with them concerning passion and cross, He again introduces what He has to say of His resurrection, having made mention of a kingdom before them, and so calling His own resurrection. And wherefore did He drink after He was risen again? Lest the grosser sort might suppose the resurrection was an appearance. For the common sort made this an infallible test of His having risen again. Wherefore also the apostles also persuading them concerning the resurrection say this, "We who did eat and drink with Him" [Act 10:41]. To show therefore that they should see Him manifestly risen, again, and that He should be with them once more . . . He says, "Until I drink it new with you" . . . But what is "new?" In a new, that is, a strange manner, not having a passible body, but now immortal [free from the passions] and incorruptible, and not needing food. It was not then for want that He both ate and drank after the resurrection, for neither did His body need these things any more, but for the full assurance of His resurrection.

> And wherefore did He not drink water after He was risen again, but wine? To pluck up by the roots another wicked heresy. For since there are certain who use water in the mysteries; to show that both when He delivered the mysteries He had given wine, and that when He had risen and was setting before them a mere meal without mysteries, He used wine.[10]

We have seen that St. Eutychius speaks clearly of a permanent offering, or permanent self-sacrifice, on the part of the Lord after the Resurrection as constituting the foundation of the Eucharist, but at least once the Gospel of Luke gives us to understand that the Lord celebrated the Eucharist on earth, and *after* the Resurrection, as a visible act of making present this invisible state of permanent self-offering in which He remains. That is, in the Eucharist we see the transition from its visible celebration by Christ to His presence as invisible offering at the time of the Eucharist's consummation, and this presence provides the basis for Christ's presence and self-offering, which are visibly represented in the Eucharist throughout all ages: "Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight" (Luke 24:30–31). It was necessary to show the disciples that Christ had risen *in fact* and that, as the risen Lord, He continue to celebrate the Eucharist using the new wine of the Kingdom. In any case, here Jesus brings again to their minds the Mystical Supper, and hence also the command He gave them at that moment to celebrate the Eucharist for all time to come as a remembrance of Him. This *anamnesis* will not be merely a remembrance of what has been but a continuation of His presence with them as risen Lord; and yet Christ is the same Person who in the beginning celebrated the Eucharist visibly. He shows them that now, once Christ has risen, they have proof that in the Eucharist they can possess Him in a real way, even if He cannot now be seen.

St. John Chrysostom has interpreted the words of Jesus about the new wine in the sense that, after the Resurrection—and hence also in the Eucharist—the body of Christ itself will be "free from the passions and incorruptible." Properly speaking, this alone will make the Eucharistic transformation possible and turn the act of eating His body into our salvation. For this alone will signify the complete union of the divinity of Christ with the body that He assumed, and so also His union with us by means of that same body in the forms of bread and wine. For it is only through this union that His body becomes for us a source of eternal life. We thus have an explanation of how the Lord is really present in the Eucharist with His body and blood, and why we must partake of them in the Eucharist.

The pneumatized character of Christ's body after the Resurrection, and hence in the Eucharist, is affirmed clearly by the Savior Himself when He announces that those who want to enter into life will have to eat His body and blood in faith. These words are another proof of the real presence of the body and blood of the Lord in the Eucharist and another proof of His institution of the Eucharist. In the Gospel of John, after declaring many times that only the one who eats His flesh, which He will give for the life of the world, will live forever (John 6:51), and after seeing the offense taken from these words by the disciples, the Lord goes on to explain, "Does this offend you? . . . It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:61, 63). That is, the Spirit who is present in the body, the Spirit who has made the body wholly spiritual, makes the Lord's body, in the mystery of the Eucharist, into food for salvation and life. The hypostasis of the Word gives to the body a quality like that which belongs to one who has come down from heaven, whereas the Spirit makes this body capable of being raised up to heaven, or of becoming a wholly spiritualized body (John 6:50, 62). St. John Chrysostom writes,

> For whosoever deemed that He was Joseph's son could not receive His sayings, while one that was persuaded that He had come down from heaven, and would ascend thither [for He was formed through the hypostasis that descended from heaven and would ascend to heaven through the Spirit that would spiritualize Him], might more easily give heed to His words; at the same time He brings forward also another explanation, saying, "It is the Spirit that quickens, the flesh profits nothing" [John 6:63]. His meaning is, "You must hear spiritually what relates to Me, for he who hears carnally is not profited" . . . Then it was their duty to wait for the proper time . . . "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" [John 6:63]. That is, they are divine and spiritual, have nothing carnal about them, are not subject to the laws of physical consequence, but are free

> from any such necessity, are even set above the laws appointed for this world.[11]

What Chrysostom says here can be summarized as follows: in the Eucharist the Lord is able to be present with His body, and is able to give us Himself to eat so that we may have eternal life, precisely because that body has come into such an intimate union with God the Word through the Incarnation, which means, in effect, that it has come from heaven. Moreover, through the Resurrection and the Ascension, the same body has been made wholly spiritual, which in turn means that it has been raised up to heaven, having been engulfed by the Spirit of God, and has achieved the highest possible union with the Godhead.

There is no doubt that the presence of the Lord with His body and blood in the Eucharist, and the transformation of the bread and wine so that He may become our food, constitutes a great mystery. The close union of this body with the Word and the fact that it is made wholly spiritual by His Spirit may explain the possibility of this transformation, but they do not explain *the mode* by which it comes about. The attempt to project a few rays of light upon this mystery is only undertaken here with the intention of making its profundity and complexity more evident and of not leaving it completely opaque.

C. The Presence of the Lord's Body and Blood in the Eucharist and the Transformation of the Bread and Wine

The Word of God is the Reason (Logos) in which the reasons or rational principles (*logoi*) of all created things have their origin and model. By making Himself the hypostasis of a human body through the Incarnation, the divine Reason attracts into the deepest possible intimacy with Himself the reason of the body He has assumed as an image of a reason from within Himself. In some fashion, the Word Himself, because He is the divine Reason behind the reasons of all created things, becomes also the reason of the body that He has assumed, yet He does not thereby suppress that reason in itself, or, by implication, the body either. But the reason of His own body, immersed within the divine Reason, is also united there with the reasons of the elements of bread and wine that maintain the body or are meant to be assimilated by the body. On the level of our own earthly life, and through an integral process of natural assimilation, the reasons of bread and wine are transformed into the reason of our body and blood, whereas in the heart of the divine Reason, this same transformation takes place in a single moment. Thus the bread and wine of the Eucharist remain without any foundation for their existence within their own separate reasons; they abide as simple forms of their reasons immersed within the reason of the body of the incarnate Logos. But within the divine Reason, the reason of the body that Christ assumed also recovers its full interpenetration with the reason of any and every other human body. Each human being is free to choose whether he will be open to accept this interpenetration between the reason of the Lord's body and the reason of His own body. His body can feed on the body of the Lord and achieve intimate union with that body within the sphere of the Word of God, where its own reason is immersed. The pneumatization of the Lord's body makes the presence of the hypostasis of the Word that is revealed through it into something transparent and overwhelming, and as such that presence can be received, in their flesh, by those who believe, as part of this ultimate union. This presence of the Lord's body made wholly spiritual and engulfed by the transparence of the Word, and consequently raised up and immortal, imparts to our bodies too what the Fathers called "the leaven of immortality"; this includes the leaven of the transparence of the Word through the body and the leaven of spiritualization. We are free to choose whether, through what we ourselves contribute by our pursuit of purity and virtue, we will in fact actualize or assimilate these qualities of our body; if we do, our body advances farther and farther within an unfathomable spiritual sensibility. Yet even if we do act completely in this way, our body still remains subject to the universal law of the process of decline and decomposition through death. Nevertheless, the new and spiritual qualities it has acquired pass over to our soul as well, and the soul will preserve them until the general resurrection when, with their help, it will be able to recast the human body in the risen state, that is, into something made wholly spiritual, for then especially the Word of God, the highest Reason, will gather within Himself the reasons or foundations of existence of all created things, uniting them intimately with His very Person.

The intimate union of the bread and wine with the body of the Lord, hypostatized in the Word, transforms the bread into the body of the Lord, because this is the reason of bread: to be transformed into body. What happens in the case of the Lord's body, when Christ unites Himself intimately with it, is not exactly the same as this, nor is it exactly the same in the case of our own body when it is united with the body of the Word. The body of the Lord is only deified and made wholly spiritual because its reason has to persevere even in the hypostatic union with God. There is infinitely less cause to think that our body will be transformed into something else through its union with the body that the Word assumed and made wholly spiritual, given that both the former and the latter remain bodies. Our body, like the body of the Lord, only sets out in its turn on the path toward pneumatization and deification, for the reason of each body is to remain the body of a particular person, whether this be the Person of the Logos or a different human person.

But why must the union of the Lord's body and blood with our body and blood come into being by means of the forms of bread and wine? Because as mystery, the act of our communing in the invisible body of the Lord must make itself perceptible to our senses through something, and bread and wine are the most fundamental and nourishing elements for our human body and blood, indeed the closest to them by affinity. They represent both the body of the Lord that was nourished by them and our own bodies. Bread and wine are nature lifted up to become the state of direct food and drink for our bodies. According to the laws of our human nature, our body transforms these substances into its own substance. In exactly the same way, Christ too transformed these substances into His body, but now, through His Spirit, He effects an instant transformation of the Eucharistic bread into His body, which is an instrument for showing forth His own hypostasis and that of the Spirit.

Nevertheless, the fact that the body and blood of the Lord make themselves present to us through the transformation of bread and wine is of such a nature that it can project new light upon the depth of the mystery of the Eucharistic transformation. In the Eucharist the Lord does not effect the transformation of bread and wine for His own sake but so that He can give Himself in communion to those who believe. He does this because they are human beings who believe and who want to partake of Him in the forms of bread and wine. This faith and desire of theirs are shown in the liturgical prayer that comes to its highest point when the priest, in the name of the liturgical community and with its participation, invokes the Holy Spirit to effect the transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of the Lord. Through the prayers, through the confession of faith, through the *epiklesis*, the community has already come to a more and more complete union with Christ; it makes no further allusion to the presence of the Lord within it through former acts of Holy Communion, nor to the fact that the community itself is the mystical body of the Lord. In this way, the Word of God, drawing the rational principles of the bread and wine within the sphere of His own intimacy, or rather, engulfing these physical elements by means of His Holy Spirit, works also from within the inner reality of the community with which He is already united in a certain degree. The community and the bread offered by it are somehow united together with the incarnate Word of God. In this milieu of an already preexisting union—between the incarnate Word, the community, and the bread—the transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ comes about as a complete identification of the bread and wine with His body and blood, and the purpose of the transformation is so that Christ's body, in the forms of bread and wine, may be united fully also with our body.

Some Catholic theologians have spoken of three bodies of Christ after the Eucharistic transformation: His personal body, His mystical body (or the Eucharistic community), and His Eucharistic body. But other Catholic theologians have observed, rightly, that in reality there can be no question of more than a single body, for the mystical body is nothing other than an extension of the personal body, whereas the Eucharistic body is the very body of the Word who offers Himself in the ongoing community of the Church as an extension of His mystical body. This does not abolish the distinction between the Church and the personal body of Christ, from which His mystical body is always being formed.[12]

The Eucharistic body is none other than the personal body of Christ, in the process of providing further nourishment to His mystical body, open to and desirous of this act of nourishing. The mystical body (the Eucharistic community) possesses on one hand something additional when compared with the personal body of the Lord, for, as the bodies of the faithful enter into it, its composition is more complex; on the other hand the mystical body possesses the divine life to a much less actualized degree than the personal body of the Lord, and hence is both capable and desirous of nourishing itself continually from that body, for the Lord is always giving it His own body in the form of the Eucharistic body. The community yields itself up to the Lord, urged on by a thirst to reduce the differences between itself and the body of the Lord, and to fill itself more and more with Him. On His end, the Lord yields Himself up to the community of the Church, coming to meet it at the point of its need and supplication in order to fill it more and more with Himself. In this sense Christ is the heavenly bread that is eternally given for the eating; it never runs out, nor does it ever definitively satisfy the need for nourishment felt by the faithful and the community of the Church. Therefore, the transformation of the earthly bread into heavenly bread and its imparting to the community is an act of the Lord, but it is an act that is also provoked by the need felt and the Eucharistic community's supplication. In the Eucharistic transformation and communion, there occurs an act whereby what already exists in the Church is fulfilled organically, but there also occurs an advent or coming of the Lord into the heart of the Church as something over and above what is already there.

When human beings love one another, each one endlessly gives and petitions. In Eucharistic love, it is the community alone that petitions and Christ alone who gives Himself. Nevertheless, such petitioning too comes from the power of what the Church already possesses, and it is important if love is to be received and made real. In this sense the petitioning also has a positive role in producing those new advents of Christ, and Christ, in another sense, is already in the Church and therefore also comes from her. For this reason, the Eucharist, and our communion in the Eucharist, cannot take place except in the Church.

D. The Eucharist as Sacrifice and Mystery

The nature of a mystery implies that God imparts His activity for us to share, as grace and as gift, while we, through sacrifice, offer to God that which is ours and our very being. In the Eucharist, these two movements (from us to God and from God to us) encounter one another in the most complex and marked manner. The Eucharist is made up of numerous feelings, acts, and concerns that come from us to God, and from God to us. In this the Eucharist closely resembles a human face that as a result of this encounter has a complex design, made up of numberless lines that have their origin from us, from nature, and from above; these lines serve to turn this face outward, inward, or in the direction of heaven.

The aspects of sacrifice and of mystery found in the Eucharist are inseparable. Even as sacrifice the Eucharist is a mystery, because it is when we give ourselves to God that we ascend and commune in His holiness and blessing.[13] And even the mystery is a sacrifice, for the body of the Lord that is given to us exists in the state of being a sacrificed and risen body and imprints upon us this same state of sacrifice, through which we are raised up and advance toward resurrection.

Moreover, all the mysteries have this double character of both mystery and sacrifice, for in all of them Christ gives Himself for our sake and gives us to the Father together with Himself, and yet at the same time He gives Himself to us too. In baptism Christ establishes in us a new life capable of offering itself with Him in sacrifice to God; in chrismation He gives us the power of progressing in the virtues, which are a form of self-sacrifice. Penance in turn is the grace of forgiveness that we encounter when we renounce our selfish pleasures. Priesthood is the consecration to God of the one who is ordained and the power needed to live a life devoted to God and the Church. Marriage is a gift that enables us to love and to give ourselves authentically, and at the same time to curb our selfishness.

Thus all the mysteries are bound up with the sacrifice of Christ. It is from Christ's state of sacrifice that we receive, in each of the different sacraments, the power to offer ourselves in sacrifice. We cannot do this merely by remembering His sacrifice on Golgotha, for in that case human beings themselves would be the source of this power, and hence the mysteries would no longer be mysteries. Rather, the power comes from Christ's current state of sacrifice, and this state is the extension of His surrender as man to the Father, a surrender that the Lord, because He was in a body capable of dying, consummated by accepting His own bloody death. After His death in the body, however, He extends this state of sacrifice by surrendering His humanity in a total and spiritual way to the Father so that it may be entirely filled with the Godhead, which maintains it elevated to the state of resurrection, ascension, and spiritualization.

In the Eucharist Christ does not only give us an effluence from His state of sacrifice and resurrection, but He gives us His very body in that state. Hence the Eucharist is the culmination of all the other sacraments. At the outset, in the sacraments of baptism and chrismation, the faithful begin the ascent toward this high point, or prepare themselves for this complete reception of Christ; after their baptism, however, if they have committed sins, they prepare themselves through the sacrament of repentance, and in any case they prepare themselves by fasting and guarding themselves in particular against improper and inappropriate thoughts and deeds. When they have been strengthened in this way by the reception of Christ in the Eucharist, the faithful are also able to receive the power of His sacrifice, which prepares them to dedicate or sacrifice their lives to God and the Church, or, because they are filled with the Spirit of Christ, to devote themselves to the duties they have toward their neighbors.

Because Protestantism holds the view that the problem of our salvation has been resolved juridically through the death Christ suffered in our stead, it is natural enough that it does not admit that the Eucharist is a sacrifice. However, this view also has the effect of undermining the foundations of all the sacraments, because their inner content is the power of Christ's current sacrificial state.

Although Catholicism resolves the problem of salvation in just as juridical a manner as Protestantism, it has managed, on the basis of the tradition of the ancient Church, to preserve the idea of the Eucharist as a sacrifice and indeed to preserve all the other sacraments as well. However, it no longer relates the Eucharistic sacrifice to Christ's current sacrificial state. Instead, it has recourse to every other manner of unconvincing explanation as to why the Eucharist is sacrificial in character, and it no longer perceives the intimate connection that links the faithful who partake of Christ in Communion to Christ's sacrificial state. Catholicism sees the Eucharist only as a union with Christ in love, as a source of power, joy, and resurrection. Consequently, it separates the character of mystery in the Eucharist from that of sacrifice, and accordingly sees no aspect of sacrifice in the other sacraments either. All this is connected with the fact that Catholicism has eliminated ascetical efforts from the life of the faithful, and affirms the importance only of the signs of power, forgetting that *a power that lacks the essential character of asceticism becomes a worldly power, not a spiritual one.*

The active tendency of sacrifice is tantamount to a movement toward convergence, but this convergence exists not only between the Son of God become man and those who believe in Him but also among all the believers. For they place themselves in agreement with the will of God, and that will is that the faithful too should be found within a relationship of sacrifice and convergence among themselves.

Christianity affirms the belief that conflict is the expression of sin, whereas sacrifice, far from being opposed to movement, is a convergent movement that leads in the direction of forward progress. This convergent movement does not become pointless, by turning back on itself eternally in a circle, but instead leads those who are partners into an ever-deepening knowledge of the infinity of Trinitarian being and love, and these in turn empower human persons to partake of that infinity in ways that are endlessly new.

Because the mysteries preserve the power that the faithful possess, in their life in Christ, to sacrifice themselves without end, they thereby also sustain in them this movement of convergence and of endless progress.

In the Eucharist Christ offers Himself as man in sacrifice to the Father, but this is not some kind of juridical transaction; instead, it is the way that Christ opens up for us the path toward the Father. It is to this end, therefore, that He places Himself at our disposal in the Eucharist: so that together with Himself, He can also offer us to the Father. For we can only enter before the Father when we are in a pure sacrificial state, and we can only reach this state of pure sacrifice by our participation in Christ's state of pure sacrifice. In this sense, therefore, Christ is offering Himself continually to the Father in order to give us the power to offer ourselves also with Him. "Thus in Christ we become capable of coming before God, who deems us worthy of seeing Him as the ones who are sanctified,"[14] or, "For always and most certainly we will be received favorably by the Father, if Christ as Priest presents us to Him."[15]

But Christ offers us as sacrifices not as if we were simply objects but rather as persons, and therefore as sacrifices who can make the offering of their own selves. We must make this offering by living a life given over to God and by dying to the passions that chain us to the world or lock us up within ourselves. "By dying to the world through the mortification of the body, we live for God through the evangelical life, and, as we lift ourselves up through the sacrifice of the Spirit, we spread around a sweet fragrance and find entrance to the Father through the Son."[16]

We draw the power to live this life of sacrifice from the sacrificial state into which we transpose ourselves with Christ in the Eucharist. Thus the fact that Christ also takes us to Himself so that, by an act of mutual self-sacrifice, He can offer us in sacrifice to the Father produces an intimate union between His sacrifice and ours, in the sense that our sacrifice is part of His and His sacrifice is part of ours, or again that we are within Him who is offering Himself and He is within us who are offering ourselves: "After Emmanuel—the new incorruptible fruit of humanity—had risen from the dead, He ascended into heaven so as to appear in the presence of God the Father for us [Heb 9:24], not offering Himself in God's sight [for He is always together with the Father and is never separated from Him as God], but offering us in Himself in the sight of the Father, especially those who turned away from His face and were under His wrath due to Adam's disobedience."[17] Or also: "The smoke rising from the slain Lamb in the morning and toward evening is a type of Him who together with us and from our midst rises toward the Father in a sweet fragrance, also bringing along with Himself the life of those who believed in Him."[18]

In a special way, this is due to the fact that through the Incarnation Christ has become our fundamental hypostasis. His sacrifice is not a sacrifice offered on His own behalf but on ours. But for that to be the case, we must appropriate the sacrifice He made on our behalf, just as He too actually appropriates our sacrifice when He offers it as His own. The fragrance of His sacrifice thus becomes the fragrance of our sacrifice too, and the fragrance of our sacrifice the fragrance of His. "For in Christ's sacrifice we are included as offering, and through Him we who are defiled are able to approach. But we are justified through faith and offer ourselves to the Father as a sweet fragrance, and it is no longer us, but Christ who lives within us, who is the pleasing spiritual fragrance."[19]

The bread offered to God as one of the Eucharistic loaves is the same bread that sustains human life; hence the community proclaims through this gesture that it is putting its own life at God's disposal. But bread, like life itself, is something that human beings possess as a gift from God. In the bread that they bring in offering to God, they therefore are returning this gift to God, or they are giving back to God the condition of their life and consequently their very life itself, still developing. Through the descent of the Holy Spirit, however, the bread—or life offered as a gift—is transformed into the body of Christ, and this body, given to the faithful as a gift of a higher order, lifts up the whole of their life to a deified state. Nevertheless, if the bread offered by the community is to be transformed into His body, Christ must take it into Himself as a sacrifice of the community. The Eucharist thus is constituted of a dialogue and encounter of gifts between human beings and God in Christ, and as the culmination of this dialogue and encounter. This dialogue unfolds not only in life but also throughout the course of the Liturgy, as it lifts itself up to the culminating stage that it assumes in the Eucharist.

There is no individualistic separation between the sacrifice of Christ and our sacrifice. The encounter between Christ and ourselves is complete, an intimate communicating within His and our sacrificial attitude and state. On one hand, therefore, we offer ourselves to God, but on the other hand Christ takes us to Himself and includes us within the framework of His own sacrifice. Put another way, He makes real the sacrifice He offers for our sake as our own sacrifice offered by Him, or, again, Christ makes our sacrifice His own. "Each offers his life as a gift to God the Pantocrator."[20] But our sacrifice is offered by Christ within the framework of His own sacrifice, and He offers it as one of the ways His sacrifice bears fruit for us and is made a reality.

However, just as there exists no individualistic separation between my sacrifice and Christ's, likewise no such separation exists between my sacrifice and that of all other human beings. Hence the Eucharist belongs to the Church, to the community. But the ecclesial community has offered itself not only through bread but through all its prayers, through all the declarations in which it gives itself to God, and these declarations express its feelings: "Let us commend ourselves and one other, and our whole life unto Christ our God."[21] The ecclesial community lifts itself up toward unification with Christ through the prayers in which it asks the Holy Spirit to bless its life, and, in the culminating moment, through the invocation of the Holy Spirit, when the priest says, "Send down your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts here offered."[22]

The Spirit transforms the community's offering of bread and wine—the sacrifice of the community's life—into Christ's sacrifice, into His sacrificed body. And Christ brings this sacrificed body to the Father, but then He gives it to the community to be its food and drink, so that the community too may be filled with His sacrificed body to a greater and greater degree. This is why Christ has transformed the bread and wine into His body and blood, offering Himself to the Father and giving Himself to the faithful in these forms.

The sacrificed personal body of Christ encounters His mystical body, sacrificed in the Eucharistic bread and wine. The body of the Lord sacrificed in the Eucharist is His body only, but in Him it possesses the gift of the community—or, rather, the sacrifice of the community—so that Christ can thus present this sacrifice also, in Himself, to the Father. The community, although present as sacrifice in the bread transformed into His body, is not confused with the personal body of Christ but remains in a dialogical relationship with Him, as an infinite reservoir of gifts. The community would lose, if it were confused with the personal Christ, its character of being *a community of persons*, and would thus be depersonalized. The faithful preserve always the consciousness that through Christ they are offering themselves too, although they offer themselves through the power of Christ and thus Christ is also offering them. However, He offers them in His sacrifice as distinct persons, not as objects fused together.

Especially in the moment of receiving Communion, the community, although it is closely united in Christ from beforehand, receives only His body. For Christ always remains distinct from the community because He is the one who gives Himself in Communion. Unity with Christ passes through different levels, however, but the faithful, in their reality as persons, always remain distinct as copartners of the dialogue and as those who are partakers of Christ. They do not give themselves to one another to be received in Communion, nor do they partake in some way of their own selves. Now, the same thing occurs with the community: however united with Christ it might be, the community always remains as the one who partakes of Christ, and Christ is the one who gives Himself for this act of partaking. The community never partakes of its own self. The distinct personal character of the believer and the fact that he partakes only of Christ and not of the community are both affirmed in the words spoken by the priest at the moment of Communion: "The servant of God *N.* partakes of the precious body and blood of our Lord and God Jesus Christ."[23]

In all the mysteries, just as in the Eucharist, a personal relationship, or at least a new stage in the personal relationship that Christ has with each believer, is inaugurated through the mystery, even though this personal relationship occurs within the framework of the community, that is, within the connection that each person has with all the others. The graces, or *charismata*, of the mysteries are given to persons, because persons can be entrusted with the responsibility to see that, from the power of Christ's sacrifice, these graces will become realized and developed through the efforts of a life of sacrifice.

The dialectic of our assumption as a sacrifice in Christ and of our preservation as distinct persons also takes on concrete form in the fact that besides the loaf from which the Lamb is taken to be the future body of Christ, the faithful also offer other loaves, and from these are taken the particles that are placed around the Lamb, together with the particles representing the saints and the Mother of the Lord. The custom of the particles is not attested prior to the eleventh century, but it is known that before that time commemoration was simply made of the names of those who requested it after the gifts had been brought forward.[24] This means that the sacrifices of the faithful were considered even at that time to be taken up by Christ into His own sacrifice. Later, however, in order to avoid the impression of depersonalizing the sacrifices of the faithful, it was thought necessary to be more precise about the fact that their personal identity remained in the offering of their sacrifices, and this was achieved by placing the particles that represented them alongside the Lamb.

In this sense St. Cyril of Alexandria perceives on one hand that we are included within Christ as sacrifices, while on the other hand he affirms that our sacrifices are different from that of Christ. He returns to the dialectical fact that those who sacrifice themselves to others, or for the sake of others, experience a convergence among themselves and yet also experience the distinction between themselves, or may be said to die to themselves. But this dying to self implies only a death to an existence that is individualistic and isolated, not a death to existence in itself, and certainly not a death to a life dedicated to achieving the good, which is an expression of personal responsibility. "Therefore, in Christ we too will rest from earthly endeavors, observing the spiritual Sabbath. But we will not rest from sanctified deeds, that is, the duty to offer to God spiritual sacrifices and spiritual gifts. By following Christ's footsteps, as it is written [1 Pet 2:21], we sacrifice ourselves."[25]

This is why the Church did not adopt the idea that the particles from the loaves that represent the sacrifice of the personal life of the faithful would also be transformed into the body of Christ. Obviously, there was even less possibility of coming to accept the idea that these particles would be transformed into the bodies of those who brought them. Such a concept would imply that when the faithful receive Communion, it is of themselves or of one another that they partake, something that the very custom of introducing the particles into the Liturgy sought to avoid. The fact that the faithful partake of the body of Christ merges with the fact that, in the very act of communing, they remain within an existence distinct from that of Christ, or rather, not confused with His. The dialectic of the unity that the faithful have in Christ, without partaking of one another as they do in the body of Christ, but only by partaking of the power of Christ that shines forth from all of them—although in fact more from some, and less from others—has taken on concrete form on one hand through the transformation of the community's offering of bread into the body of Christ, and on the other through the custom of placing around the Lamb all the particles that represent the faithful.

The saints, and especially the Mother of the Lord, also enter into the communion of the Lord's mystical body. The particles that represent them also represent in one way their act of mystical self-giving to God, according to the likeness of Christ, but in another way they stand for the dedication of all their spiritual victories as gifts offered to Christ, as proofs of the fruit that Christ's sacrifice has borne in them and as examples to be imitated by the living.[26] Although the saints are united with Christ to the highest degree, nevertheless they too are represented as distinct persons by the separate particles. This is also the reason why their particles are not transformed into the body of Christ nor into their own bodies: because it is not of them that we partake in Communion; we rejoice only in the power of Christ shining forth from within them. Thus commemoration is made of the saints in order to give glory to Christ and His sacrifice, but also to commemorate their own glory. In his work *Adoration in Spirit and Truth*, St. Cyril observes, "The victories of the saints are gifts that must be dedicated to Christ, the High Priest of all, and they are not to remain hidden from the people."[27]

It should be noted, however, that Christ does not only offer Himself as sacrifice; He also offers up the community, and the community, by offering itself as a sacrifice from the power of Christ's sacrifice, offers Christ. In this way an even greater affirmation is made of the abiding existence of the community as a community of persons, as well as of the reciprocity between Christ and the community in the offering of the sacrifice. "Once again we offer You this spiritual worship without the shedding of blood, and we ask, pray and entreat You: send Your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts here offered."[28]

This shows that the moment of the offering of Christ as sacrifice coincides with the moment of the transformation of the gifts.[29] It also shows, however, that the offering of the sacrifice also implies a certain sanctification of the community through the descent of the Holy Spirit, and hence an aspect of mystery. The faithful offer up themselves when they offer the bread and the wine mixed with water, for these represent the very substance of their lives. The intention of offering their very selves in these gifts is also shown in the prayers with which they accompany this offering, prayers that express more clearly the very act of giving themselves spiritually. This is because those who pray, give themselves to God.

It must also be remembered that the substances destined to be transformed into the body of the faithful are at the same time the principal substances from which the body of the Lord was also constituted: bread, wine, and water. In the Liturgy these are changed instantly into the body and blood of Christ, and in this same way, into the body and blood of the faithful. The unity that the community has with Christ in prayer causes the growth of that spiritual power through which this transformation is effected, for the whole is made spiritual from the power of the spiritualized body of Christ.

Nevertheless, because the complete process of sanctification depends on our partaking of the sacrifice, there is an interval between the moment of transformation, or the time when the Eucharist is realized as sacrifice, and the moment of partaking, or the time when it is realized as mystery. This space is filled by prayers that are meant to prepare the faithful for their communion with the body and blood of the Lord. But the persistence of the aspect of sacrifice even within the aspect of mystery is shown by the very fact that the faithful receive Communion in the forms of bread and wine; furthermore, the priest declares to each of the faithful that he partakes of the body and blood of the Lord, but also of the fraction of the body, immediately before the reception of Communion and the recitation of the words that accompany the fraction: "The Lamb of God is broken and shared, broken but not divided; forever eaten yet never consumed, but sanctifying those who partake of Him."[30] Even the sanctification of the believers who share in the Communion is an effect of their partaking in the sacrifice, because it signifies an even more complete transposition of the faithful into that sacrificial state that comes from the power of Christ's sacrifice. Properly speaking, *it is only through the act whereby the faithful partake in Holy Communion that the Eucharist reaches its conclusion as sacrifice and as mystery, for it is only at that moment that its purpose as a sacrifice offered to the Father is achieved, as is its purpose in sanctifying the faithful; it is only at that moment that the name of each of the faithful is pronounced, as it is in all the mysteries.*

The fraction of the body before Communion brings to its conclusion a fraction already begun during the *Proskomidia*. The *Proskomidia* in turn represents the birth of the Lord and reveals that already in His birth it was presupposed that Christ was destined to die on the cross and to be our nourishment. Christ's disposition to be sacrificed even from the time of His birth shows that the Lord exists in a state of sacrifice not only at the time of the Crucifixion but also after the Resurrection and Ascension, in order that we may partake of Him in the state of sacrifice and thus make this sacrificial state our own.

This is why the Orthodox faithful approach the sacrificed body of the Lord only after a certain period spent in fasting, which represents their own inner disposition toward sacrifice. From this teaching of the Church Fathers concerning Christ's state of sacrifice after the Resurrection, Nicholas Cabasilas has drawn the further idea that the moment of the offering of Christ as sacrifice coincides with the transformation of the gifts, inasmuch as the body of Christ, which in that moment takes the place of the bread, is His sacrificed body.[31]

Due to their unawareness of this continuing sacrificial state of Christ, because the juridical theory of satisfaction has no need of it, Catholic theologians have sought solutions to the question of what constitutes the essence and the precise moment of the act of sacrifice in the Eucharist, but their solutions have proved artificial and without value for our Christian life. One solution, for example, is to locate this moment during the time of the offertory or of Communion; another consists in reducing the act of sacrifice to the act of showing the body and blood separately under the separate species of bread and wine; yet another speaks of an intentional destruction of the substances of bread and wine through the transformation, or of Christ being transposed as food; and there are still others.[32]

The Church, however, affirms that we will also partake of the sacrificed and risen Christ in the life to come, and that this is anticipated by the partaking of the same Christ in the present life. In this act of eternal partaking, *the economy of salvation, as the eternal union of human beings with God in Christ*, comes to its conclusion. The Eucharist in the eternal life is, as the crowning of the divine economy, identical with that perfected act of union between creation and Christ, in whom "God will be all in all" (1 Cor 15:28).

E. The Priest as Celebrant of the Eucharist

The visible celebrant of the Eucharist is the priest or bishop as the instrument of Christ and as the representative of the Church. The faithful experience in this the fact that Christ, who offers Himself for them, is distinct from them; and as such He makes use of a person, different from themselves and chosen by Himself through a special consecration, as the instrument of the visible celebration of the mysteries. The priest is consecrated by a special act of consecration just as Christ Himself was consecrated, as a man, by the Father through the Spirit, so that He could offer Himself as sacrifice.

This binds the Eucharist to the Church, for the bishop or priest is consecrated by God in the Church and for the sake of the Church, and he must celebrate the mysteries in her and for her. The Christ who is in heaven is the same one who is also in the Church, because the Church is His mystical body; Christ is not different in heaven and in the Church. And behind the priest stands the Church. He lifts up her prayers, and the community accompanies him; he offers the sacrifice of Christ, as a sacrifice offered on behalf of the Church, and in another sense as the sacrifice of the Church. The bishop and the priest have not taken this position on their own, and hence it is not from themselves that they offer Christ as sacrifice; Christ must indicate and consecrate a particular person for this purpose. Nevertheless, Christ does so within the reality of the Church; this is especially the case because He offers Himself as sacrifice not for one person alone but for all: for the entire community, or for the local Church.[33] On his own, therefore, no one can transform himself into the one who offers the sacrifice of Christ on behalf of the whole community. St. Cyril of Alexandria says that just as in the old law the paschal lamb could be sacrificed only in Jerusalem, so in the law of the New Testament Christ can be offered as sacrifice only in the Church, through a legitimate priest. "For the only proper place for the mystery of Christ is the holy city, namely, the Church, where the legitimate priest is and where holy things are performed through consecrated hands . . . Therefore, the heretics, who distort what is correct, despise the law in this regard, for they sacrifice the Lamb neither in the holy city nor through the hands of those chosen through the Spirit for the holy service, but, as St. Paul says [Heb 5:4], they snatch the honor for themselves and offer sacrifices in every place."[34]

Moreover, the faithful must experience the fact that it is not they themselves who present to the Father their personal sacrifices, which represent the whole of their lives as sacrifice, but that this is done through Christ, and all this is reflected by the fact that Christ chooses the human person through whom He visibly celebrates the act of receiving the sacrifices and prayers of the faithful in order to present them to the Father. If this were not the case, Christ's relationship with the faithful would dissolve into an illusion, that is, a subjective feeling in which Christ's objective reality would become extremely difficult to distinguish.

Through the importance that the Church's prayer on behalf of the community and the faithful has in his ministry, the priest gives solidity to the feeling of both himself and the faithful that Christ is at work through him. His importance is intertwined with his humility, and this is manifested in the prayer authorized by Christ and the Church. In this the presence of Christ is felt. Through the prayer of the Church, the celebrant subjects himself to Christ, and from Christ he expects all things, but he also unites himself with Christ. And it is not as an individual person that the priest subjects himself or unites himself to Christ but as the representative of the community and of the faithful, for he is praying for the community and for the faithful, and in him and with him the community and the faithful also are praying. The priest himself enlarges his own heart, expanding it in prayer, so that he can feel how it contains the community and the faithful, who are praying within his prayer. In the invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the gifts, therefore, the community also exists within the priest, as a community that offers itself to God through prayer and through the Eucharistic gifts. Hence the unity of the community in the right faith and in the prayer that results from this unity is a matter of necessity. Just as necessary is the community's unity with Christ in the Holy Spirit, a unity expressed and preserved by the priest's prayer and faith that the Holy Spirit will effect the transformation of the gifts and the sanctification of the community.[35] This is why the Orthodox Church cannot allow those of other faiths to concelebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharistic transformation or to partake of Holy Communion.

The elimination of the *epiklesis* in the Catholic Liturgy is connected with the diminished importance of the prayer of the priest and of the community in the Eucharistic transformation, and also with the diminished role of the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit works through prayer. In Catholic thought the transformation of the gifts has become the automatic consequence of the words that Christ spoke at the Last Supper to institute the sacrament, and hence the automatic consequence of certain words spoken in the past. Conversely, through the *epiklesis*, the importance of the prayer of the bishop or priest is made apparent; it is the expression of his humble sensitivity to the activity of the Spirit of Christ at work through him, whereby the priest vividly experiences the prayer of the community, which is united in him and with him in prayer. When individuals pray in isolation or seek the unity of their prayers in a vague momentary feeling, the unity of the Church is lost, and transformation is not tied to the prayer of a community united in Christ, a community that experiences this unity of its prayer in a visible and representative person who is the objective center of its convergence. This is the case in Protestantism. But the unity of the Church is also weakened when the members of the hierarchy make use of means foreign to prayer in order to maintain the unity of the Church in Christ, which is conceived of more as an impersonal and even antipersonal unity, unconnected to Christ; such is the case in Catholicism, in which the transformation of the gifts likewise remains unconnected to this Church's unity, through prayer, in Christ.

In the Orthodox Church, all the sacraments are celebrated through the Holy Spirit, who is invoked through the prayer that the priest makes as a prayer of the Church and as an expression of the humble consciousness that all comes from God through the prayer of the Church, and that hence the prayer of the celebrant is the prayer of the Church and the prayer of each one of the faithful. It is a prayer made from the power of the Spirit who is present in the Church and who is entering into the Church. In this humble awareness, the priest or bishop realizes that the mystery is being celebrated, as a result of this prayer, by the Spirit of Christ; he does not declare that he himself effects it. He says, "The servant of God *N.* is baptized," not "I baptize you," and so forth. Such humility does not mean, however, that the person of the celebrant is somehow nullified, for without person there is no prayer, and without a person in whom the prayer of all is concentrated, the unity of the community is not concretely realized.

Catholicism passes from the affirmation of the individualistic role of the priest, who works more by declarations than by prayers, to the judgment that his role in the sacraments is not indispensable, because the efficacious unity of the Church is made visible in one remote person. And even in this connection, no emphasis is placed upon the personal relation of the one who receives the sacrament with the celebrating priest as the visible instrument of Christ.[36] Thus baptism, in cases of necessity, can be celebrated not only by someone who is not a priest, as is also the case in the Orthodox Church, but even by someone who is outside the Church. Confirmation is celebrated by the bishop. The sacrament of marriage is celebrated by those who are getting married, the priest being a mere witness. Ordination is celebrated by the bishop. In confession the penitent experiences a relationship with the divine law and the Church in the abstract, not with the face of a priest who represents the loving, personal face of Christ. In the sacrament of holy unction, celebrated as the extreme unction of the dying, the recipient no longer represents a partner conscious of the relationship with the priest. The Eucharist is the only remaining sacrament in which the role of the priest is still necessary, but there is no *epiklesis* as a prayer that emphasizes the priest's quality as person and as center of the community's prayer, and the transubstantiation happens more or less on its own, through the repetition of the Savior's words of institution.

Thus by diminishing the role of the priest as person, the importance of the recipient's personal relationship with and commitment to the priest is also diminished. The recipient is no longer mentioned by name; the priest only declares, "I baptize you . . . ," "I absolve you . . . ," "the body of Christ." These words can refer to any individual with a uniform and indistinct mass. The exercise of power over a Church whose unity is conceived of as that of a mass, rather than as a unity of persons who encounter one another in prayer, is connected with this manner of administering the sacraments to nameless individuals. The jurisdictional power of the pope, not connected to any special sacrament in its origin and practice, and even when it wants to be considered as a "primacy of service," is not a primacy of prayer, because in that case it could not be a primacy of jurisdiction.

Another kind of primacy cannot exist. For bishops and priests, who are liturgical servants in prayer, do not reduce those for whom they pray to a mass unity. Indeed, they themselves pray all the more for one another.

Protestants deny the special liturgical priesthood because they do not believe that Christ's continual presence before the Father for the sake of the faithful is a sacrifice, nor do they think it necessary that the faithful offer their own sacrifice so that Christ can receive it and unite it with His own. Accordingly, they dispute the necessity of any continuation of Christ's sacrifice, as well as the necessity of any sacrifice on the part of the faithful, holding that salvation has been obtained through the sacrifice offered by Christ on Golgotha and that this sacrifice is the juridically equivalent substitute, valid forever, for the sins of mankind. For Protestants there is therefore no need for this sacrifice to be actualized so that those who will be saved can unite themselves with the Christ who continues to exist in a state of sacrifice and who no longer lives for Himself as a man but for God.

The denial of the liturgical priesthood is based upon the conception of salvation as something realized externally in a past moment of history, and upon the understanding of faith as a purely subjective act on the part of those who will appropriate this salvation for themselves, without a commitment to the ongoing current of Christ's saving activity, which is objective and continuous by nature.

Only when we grasp that salvation depends upon Christ's objective and ongoing salvific activity does the necessity of the priest's existence also become evident, for the priest is the visible instrument through which Christ carries out this ongoing activity. Thus the believer too is drawn, together with his entire being—the seen and the unseen—into this activity, and it is to Christ that he must also open himself subjectively. And it is only this understanding of salvation that does not lead to a primacy of jurisdiction. Our salvation depends on God's ongoing activity from above, not on our simple subjective decision to accept that Christ has saved us on Golgotha, nor on any attribution of Christ's merits to our account in the absence of our own prayer. This fact must be made concrete in the priest's visible, objective activity, through which the activity of Christ in turn draws us into itself.

In this respect, the law of the New Testament fulfills that of the Old, because just as in the Old Testament objective sacrifices offered through priests were necessary, so here the objective sacrifice of Christ has to be offered through the priest as Christ's visible instrument. The difference is only that the objective sacrifices offered in the Old Testament were not sufficient to bring saving grace; that is, they did not give the faithful the power to sacrifice themselves together with the Christ who exists in a state of continual sacrifice, because Christ had not yet revealed Himself. Only in the New Testament does the objective sacrifice of Christ, offered in a continual and extended way in us, have the power to transform us believers. Christ did not work through the priesthood of the Old Testament; through the priesthood of the present time, Christ is at work upon those who believe.

St. Cyril of Alexandria sees the priesthood of the New Testament prefigured in that of the Old Testament. Recalling the obligation of the priests of the Old Testament to "attend to all the furnishings of the tabernacle of meeting" (cf. Num 3:6–10), St. Cyril says, "And if someone would like to inquire as to the order of the Church, he would be rightly amazed at the prefiguration in the law. For it was the bishops, as those who have received leadership, and those of a lower rank, namely, the priests, that have been entrusted with the altar and with the things beyond the curtain."[37]

Far from weakening the believer's awareness that he is before the face of God, the presence of the priest, accompanied by his objective activity, provides a firm foundation for this awareness, because the presence of the priest allows God to be perceived as a real and objective authority who comes to man face to face, an authority unshaken by the instability of subjective feelings. For the persons who have such feelings do not know if they do or do not possess a corresponding objective content and therefore an objective foundation. However, this unmediated presence of Christ with His sacrifice before the faithful and within them is weakened on the other hand by a primacy of jurisdiction in the Church.

CHAPTER 5

REPENTANCE: THE MYSTERY OF FORGIVENESS

The mystery of the Eucharist follows, at the beginning of the life in Christ, after the mysteries of baptism and chrismation; it perfects the unity with Christ of those who have entered into the Church. As the Christian life continues, however, the Eucharist usually follows after the mystery of confession because this strengthens anew the union with Christ in the one who, through his sins, has created a distance or a division between himself and Christ. Through confession the believer leaves this separation behind. If someone were to never commit a single sin after baptism, or were able to fully develop the powers given to him at baptism, for him the Eucharist could be imparted without the sacrament of confession; in this case, the Eucharist's only purpose would be to unite such a person more and more closely to Christ or to continually nourish his life from Christ. But given that there is no man who does not sin or who develops completely the powers imparted to him at the outset (in baptism, chrismation, and the Eucharist), the Eucharist is distributed after a confession of sins and unfulfilled duties has been made, and after these sins have been forgiven through the mystery of repentance.

The sacrament of confession, or of repentance, consists in the forgiveness of the sins—visibly by the bishop or priest, and invisibly by Christ—of those who confess these sins and do penance for them.

A. The Institution of the Mystery and Its Practice from the Beginning of the Church

We know that Christ instituted this mystery because He Himself celebrated it and was the first to impart the forgiveness of sins to certain persons, and because He also gave the power of forgiving sins to His disciples and to their successors.

Christ was indeed the first to celebrate this mystery, through the forgiveness of sins that He accorded to numerous people who confessed their faith in Him and sought His help, thereby implicitly confessing their sins and accepting His urging to sin no more. In the majority of cases, it was through the touch of His hand, or by means of some material object that He had touched with His hand, that Christ imparted the grace of healing and, implicitly, of the forgiveness of sins. All such cases occurred within the context of a direct personal relationship with the sick person: the material object was placed in contact with the body of the sick person, or power radiated out from the body of Christ, or the sick person came or was physically brought close to Christ, or He spoke a word that was full of His divine power (cf. Matt 9:20–22; 9:25; 9:28–29; 8:31–32; etc.).

Around the time of His Ascension into Heaven, given that it would no longer be possible to visibly impart the forgiveness of sins, Christ gave power to His disciples to grant this forgiveness. He gave them this power when He imparted to them the Holy Spirit, and this power is, properly speaking, His own power at work in them. Hence the forgiveness granted by His disciples and their successors is granted by Christ Himself; that is, it is a forgiveness granted in heaven. "And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained'" (John 20:22–23). This is a power that Jesus had promised to His disciples earlier, and He had prepared them for this gift: "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matt 18:18). We must understand the following words of St. John Chrysostom in the sense that the one who grants forgiveness through priests is Christ Himself: "And what priests do here below God ratifies above, and the Master confirms the sentence of his servants . . . For they have been conducted to this dignity as if they were already translated to Heaven, and had transcended human nature, and were released from the passions to which we are liable."[1] That is, the priests themselves have been taken up to heaven and have united their judgment with the judgment of Christ in an atmosphere totally free from the influence of the passions and human esteem; they have given over all judgment to Christ so that He can express His judgment through them.

Christ demonstrated the potency of this manifestation of His power through other persons even while He was on this earth, as, for example, when He healed persons at a distance through other persons who stood in direct relationship with Him (as the Syro-Phoenician woman in Matt 15:28). But the special and permanent power to forgive sins Christ gave to His disciples and their successors, and not to all who had come into contact with Him; He did this through a verifiably objective act so that it could be seen that they were not arrogating to themselves control over Christ's power simply through their own will.

Only persons chosen by Christ in an objectively verifiable manner, as the apostles were chosen, can possess and exercise the power of Christ with seriousness—and can be taken seriously by others in their exercise of it—because in this way both those who were chosen and the others possess an objective guarantee that the former have indeed been chosen by Christ. They possess this guarantee in the fact that those chosen have been revealed as such by the Holy Spirit through an act of consecration celebrated in the Church and guaranteed by the Church, through the invocation of this same Holy Spirit by a bishop—himself acting in the character of a person who was also consecrated within the Church—and so on, all the way back to the apostles. This is the only way that there can be any objective verification that a man has not simply taken upon himself Christ's power to forgive sins. It is the only way to prevent challenges to the authority of those persons whom Christ chooses, in a verifiable way, to exercise this power, and it is the only way to prevent unverifiable claims on the part of certain persons that they have received this power from Christ. For otherwise, all the faithful could claim that they were invested with the power of forgiveness. In that case, however, mutual forgiveness could degenerate into an exercise of mutual complaisance. How would it be possible to distinguish between those of the faithful who took the exercise of this act seriously and those who did not, or who, indeed, made this act the basis for complaisance or resentment?

In their relationship with Christ and the Church, the persons objectively chosen to exercise this power of forgiveness receive it on one hand from Christ; on the other hand, they receive it within the context of an act celebrated in and guaranteed by the Church. In other words, they receive it through the agency of another person, himself chosen in an act celebrated within the Church through the Church's prayer and liturgical order, and therefore through a person who has been guaranteed by the ecclesial community, in communion with all the other ecclesial communities. The selection of a person of this type is thus an act of the Holy Spirit but also an act of the Church; or rather, the Holy Spirit is at work within a visible act celebrated in the Church or by the Church. The acts celebrated by a person consecrated in this way have the quality of acts of Christ, through the fact that they have the endorsement of the Church. *In her character as the body of Christ, filled with Christ, the Church is the visible milieu in which and through which Christ chooses certain persons whom He invests with His power so that, through them, He Himself can exercise this power.*

The mystery of the forgiveness of sins by the bishops or priests of the Church has been practiced since the beginning of the Church. The case of Ananias and Sapphira proves, by way of exception, the rule of confessing sins before the apostles (Acts 5:3). It is true that in the Epistle of James the following counsel is given: "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (Jas 5:16). But this text, as is evident, does not say that the faithful are freed from their sins through this mutual confession. For this, there must be forgiveness from God, and only the bishop or priest, because he is chosen and sent by God, can offer this forgiveness. Through their mutual confession and through the prayers that they offer for one another, the faithful are healed only of the weaknesses that lead them into the sins that they have also revealed in confession. Moreover, in the Church a mutual forgiveness is also practiced among the believers; this leads to their spiritual growth, but it is only a precondition to God's bestowal of the final forgiveness (see, for example, the Our Father, Matt 6:12 and Luke 11:4; and the Parable of the Two Debtors, Matt 18:23–35). In any case, in the verses immediately preceding the text cited above, St.

James had already shown that the absolution of sins occurs through the prayer of the priests (Jas 5:14–15).

There are numerous testimonies that, already from the beginning of the Church, all three major components of this mystery were practiced: confession of sins before a priest, repentance for these sins, and forgiveness granted by the priest.[2]

Referring to the confession of sins, the *Epistle of Barnabas* tells the Christian, "Confess your sins" (chap. 19). Clement of Rome says the same: "For it is better that a man should acknowledge his transgressions than that he should harden his heart,"[3] and also makes mention of the priest's role in receiving the confession and in imposing a penance in consequence of it. By using the singular, these disciples of the apostles show that they are talking about an individual confession on the part of sinners, not a confession made in common. In the period immediately following that of the apostles, both St. Ignatius of Antioch[4] and St. Irenaeus[5] also speak of the confession of sins.

In the third century, Tertullian likens the confession of sins to the showing of wounds or lesions to a doctor.[6] Those who do not reveal their wounds because of shame die by being eaten away by them.[7] "I give no place to bashfulness when I am a gainer by its loss."[8]

St. Cyprian concerned himself extensively with the confession of sins before the priest, with repentance for sin, and with the forgiveness imparted by the priest. He too saw in the priest a spiritual physician, and he places great emphasis on the need for the confession of sins before the bishop or priest and for the cleansing of these sins before the reception of Holy Communion. He speaks of those who, facing the danger of death, must cleanse themselves of their sins immediately: "If they should be seized with any misfortune and peril of sickness, [they] should, without waiting for my presence [as bishop], before any presbyter who might be present . . . be able to make confession of their sin, that, with the imposition of hands upon them for repentance, they should come to the Lord with the peace which the martyrs have desired."[9] This Holy Father asks for the individual confession of sins so that the priests can make a correct judgment about the condition of those who are confessing and about the penance they must impose.[10] He urges those who want to obtain forgiveness from the priest that instead of trying to obtain forgiveness by means of coercion or deception, they open their hearts so "that their breasts, covered over with the darkness of sins, may acknowledge the light of repentance."[11]

Origen too understands the confession of sins to a priest as the revelation of spiritual wounds to a physician so that they can be healed by the penance that the priest will prescribe for them. "For the chief of physicians was he who was able to heal every disease and every illness; His disciples Peter and Paul and the prophets too are also doctors like those who, after the apostles, have been placed in the Church and to whom has been entrusted the discipline of healing the wounds; it was the will of God that they be physicians of souls in His Church."[12] The existence of individual confession before the bishop (hence also before the priest) and of absolution by the bishop is also attested in the third century, in the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, which constitutes the basic text for books 1 and 2 of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, composed a little later. The *Apostolic Constitutions* instructs the bishop,

> Do not pass the same sentence for every sin, but one suitable to each crime, distinguishing various kinds of offenses with much prudence, the great from the little. Treat a wicked action in one manner, and a wicked word in another; a bare intention still otherwise. So also in the case of a contemptuous word or suspicion. And some you should curb by threatenings alone; some you should punish with fines to the poor; some you should mortify with fastings; and others you should separate according to the greatness of their distinct crimes.[13]

This separation means exclusion from Holy Communion, from the communion with Christ and hence from the communion with the rest of the faithful (excommunication).

B. The Constitutive Elements or Stages of the Mystery

The constitutive elements of the mystery are *the confession of sins*, *repentance* for these, and *absolution by the priest*. Even the confession of sins, however, cannot be looked upon as an act of the penitent in isolation from the priest, and his repentance must take concrete form in the fulfillment of certain deeds recommended by the priest. Thus the role of the priest is not reduced to the simple enunciation of an absolution at the end but is exercised throughout the whole unfolding of the mystery.

i. The Confession of Sins and Its Spiritual Value

This mystery may be said to be a mystery of intimate and sincere communication between the penitent and the priest, or even a mystery of the communion between them. In it the priest penetrates into the soul of the penitent, who opens himself up to the priest voluntarily; the nature of their contact does not remain superficial and transient. Both the penitent's contribution and that of the priest are much greater in this sacrament. In the other mysteries grace works on the plane of the objective, the ontic, at the roots of being itself, but often in a manner not perceptible to the senses. In this sacrament grace works through a more thorough and vibrant commitment on the part of the penitent, through confession and repentance, and then, on the part of the priest, in the assessment of the means that he recommends for the spiritual healing of the penitent's sickness; finally, grace works through the penitent's contribution when he complies with these recommendations. The need for a deeper commitment is explained by the fact that, whereas through the mysteries of baptism and chrismation, the sins of the sacrament's recipient were forgiven by means of a simple confession of faith and a pledge to abide in this faith and in the commandments of Christ, the mystery of repentance is celebrated in the case of someone who has proved that he has not cooperated with the grace of baptism. He thus has a greater guilt and proves that some sickness or weakness has befallen him that can lead him, even after baptism, to new lapses. In order to be healed, he therefore must explain the reasons why he has fallen and what his weaknesses are. Then, through contrition and his promise to not sin again, he must show a much more decisive commitment to struggle against those weaknesses that have already proved themselves capable of easily triumphing over his nature. The purpose of this mystery makes it evident that for persons who fall back again and again into the same grave sins, the means of remedying their weaknesses must be applied with greater and greater strictness. Otherwise, the mystery does not have the effect of providing a person with lasting remedies, and so does not again make him into a truly new man.

For this reason, the penitent in this sacrament does not merely make a general confession of faith or an unspecified commitment to a new life in Christ; he also reveals the deepest parts of his soul in their inability to offer a firm resistance to sins. He reveals the weaknesses that have led him into sin and that have developed even more as a consequence of his sin. The priest, moreover, is required to discern the weaknesses that underlie the sins known to mankind, as well as those that are unknown, together with these particular sins. In this way the penitent manifests a confidence in the priest of a kind shown to no other man, and from the priest he expects counsel, help, and absolution. Hence the priest must follow the confession attentively and truly penetrate into the soul of the one who opens himself up to the priest, who is thus able to give counsel and help appropriate to the weaknesses that have been revealed. Alongside his authority as the visible representative of God, and a considerable moral authority, the priest is also expected to possess a good knowledge of the manner in which the different human weaknesses can be cured.

Moreover, by means of the questions he asks, the priest must help and guide the penitent to move toward what is essential in his confession, so that the penitent—either intentionally or simply by not knowing what the important questions are—does not wander from the main path. It is quite possible for the penitent to get lost in a tide of sentimental and irrelevant words by which he covers up to a great extent his true sins and weaknesses, and so he goes away unhealed and lacking the recommendations necessary to produce his healing. Human beings cannot cure themselves by their own help alone, whether their tendency is on one hand to minimize their weaknesses because of their superficiality, or on the other hand to exaggerate them because of an overly scrupulous conscience. Nor can they be helped by simply anybody who comes along. Out of the wrong kind of concern to be helpful, some of their friends will want to make light of these weaknesses, whereas others will exaggerate them still more. Even those who have a rich psychological or psychiatric awareness cannot help them in the same way as a priest can, because a person also needs to confide in a divine help that, in the search for healing, can make use of all the efforts of his will.

From beginning to end, this mystery occurs between two persons within a relationship of intimacy. And this relationship is eased for the penitent because the priest presents himself to the penitent as someone who speaks to him in the name of the Lord, and the priest speaks as much with the forgiving love of God that causes the penitent not to despair as with that seriousness that keeps him from making light of the penitent's weaknesses. In the confession phase, the penitent reveals his own mystery (or secret) to the priest in a way he does to no one else, and the priest comes to know the man's mystery exclusively. On his part the penitent knows that the priest will not tell this mystery to anyone else. Even from this point of view, therefore, a mystery takes place between the two of them. Simultaneously, a profound and intimate spiritual bond—one that is completely exceptional—comes into being between the two of them. Only the priest can truly know the penitent, for only to him has the penitent revealed himself with all sincerity, knowing that the priest will never laugh at his weaknesses or divulge them or even show surprise at hearing the man's most serious deviations from the good. We could say that the two are linked in a unique kind of friendship; their souls touch and vibrate in this contact with what is most serious and intimate within themselves. Together with the priest, the penitent realizes the greatest communion that can be realized with a fellow human being. Here is a new reason for thinking that this mystery is the mystery of a communion like no other: it is the mystery of reestablishing full communion between a believer and the priest as the visible instrument of Christ and as the representative of the Church. Hence it is the mystery of bringing the penitent into communion with Christ and the Church, of preparing him for his communion with the body of Christ. No man other than the priest in the mystery of confession can fill the role of intermediary in this more extended communion with the rest of humanity and with God.

But the intimacy brought about between priest and penitent, while they are still in this phase of confession, is not of a spiritual nature only, for into it enters an air of unusual gravity: the will of the penitent to return to purity, and of the priest to be of real help to him. Such gravity is founded on the consciousness that in this relationship Christ Himself is invisibly present but transparent and perceived in a mystical way. It is Christ Himself who seeks to help them in this intention of theirs, Christ before whom both of them feel responsible, or united through their response. The penitent has confidence in the priest precisely because he feels in him that responsibility before Christ for his own soul; he feels that the priest is listening in the name of Christ and has a real power to help that comes to him from Christ. And this in turn makes the penitent open up his own soul and reveal his sins and weaknesses with full sincerity, seriousness, and repentance. Christ Himself is active in this mystery through the encounter of both of these intimate inner worlds that have reached a high degree of sensitivity.

The penitent's act of confessing with trust, seriousness, and repentance is itself an effect of Christ's activity. For the penitent does not reveal all his sins to other men, or he reveals only some of them, and then often with a kind of bravado. Because Christ is at work through the vibrant and serious intimacy established between priest and penitent, this mystery causes them to make a leap from the plane of the soul to the divine plane, where the Holy Spirit is active. For this reason, the priest is called the *duhovnic* ("spiritual father") in this sacrament, and his activity in it is a spiritual (*duhovnicească*) activity.

The spiritual space of the mystery when it is celebrated with this degree of seriousness has become, or has begun to become, a space of holiness that will have a real effect upon the reformation of the penitent. The priest will exercise the activity of spiritual fatherhood especially in directing the penitent toward a life of contrition or repentance, which he must fulfill if he is to be healed from the wounds of his sins.

The fact that the priest works as the visible instrument of Christ and as the representative of the Church does not diminish his responsibility and hence his capacity to experience a personal communion between himself and the penitent in Christ. On the contrary, his responsibility becomes more acute to the degree that he becomes more conscious of being the visible instrument of Christ.

In the course of the confession, the penitent transcends in a certain degree the sin, or the power of his sin, precisely because of this communion between two responsibilities that co-penetrate one another. The more sinful the penitent, the more vibrant the priest's responsibility to win back the person's soul, the greater his compassion for the sinner, and the more acutely he experiences the obligation to have him return to the path of salvation. This in turn awakens a sharper responsibility for sin in the penitent himself. The reality of Christ's presence between the two is suggested by the fact that the priest hears the confession of the penitent before the icon of Christ, and that after the introductory prayers he says to the penitent, "My spiritual child, Christ stands here invisibly receiving your confession made in humbleness. Therefore, do not be ashamed, nor be afraid, nor hide from me anything of what you have done, but tell me everything without any doubt or timidity, so that you may obtain forgiveness from our Lord Jesus Christ."[14] The priest seeks to elicit from the penitent a total sincerity, for the sinner makes his confession not just before a human being who can be deceived, someone before whom the confession might be considered a humiliation unbecoming to human pride, but in a special way before Christ Himself.

Often today, people are ashamed to divulge their sins, or they think it ignoble to humiliate themselves in this way before a priest. Yet these same people will on one hand often feel the need to unburden their consciences to someone, whereas on the other hand they realize that the priest inspires in them a particular trust through the great responsibility he bears before Christ and through the humility with which he listens to them, never considering himself better than the penitent. In fact, the priest disappears behind the figure of Christ, placing Christ before the conscience of the penitent as the supreme tribunal before whom no man feels humiliated, an authority who is at the same time the Person with the most understanding and forgiving love for our human helplessness, the one who prayed even for the forgiveness of those who crucified Him.

But why is the confession of sins a necessary condition for their forgiveness? Tertullian had already observed that the Lord does not ask for the confession of sins because He would be ignorant of them otherwise but because their confession is a sign of real contrition and it increases contrition,[15] because at the same time it is a sign of trust in God and in the priest who represents God.

The Lord rejoices in confession because it is the beginning of the communion into which the penitent enters once again with Christ, and because he enters in the company of a man who presents himself before God in Christ's name. The penitent thus recovers a spiritual humility or tenderness and is embarrassed by his sin and by having grieved the Lord. This is a tenderness utterly opposed to the hardness of heart that marks the impulse toward sin, which is careless or desperate selfishness. The penitent returns therefore to the capacity for pure communion with his fellow human beings. He makes the first act toward an exodus from the proud and individualistic prison within himself, from the neglect and spiritual insensitivity that have held him captive outside of this communion. The confession itself raises him up as a human person, inasmuch as it includes humble contrition for the sins confessed and the will to free himself from the mastery of sin.

Through confession the penitent makes the first act toward being raised up above sin, and in this he is aided by the introductory prayers, by the encouragement of the priest, and even by his own questions. The priest helps the penitent during the whole time of the confession by encouraging the confession itself, by not showing any eagerness to know more, and by not making any unpleasant sign of particular surprise that might serve to curb the penitent's impulse toward making his confession. Neither should the priest show any kind of carelessness, spiritual absence, boredom, or haste, but rather a strongly human understanding that does, however, seek to create and sustain the state of contrition in the penitent. By his face the priest must show that the sins that have been mentioned do not create a situation in which the penitent should despair, but he must also show that they should not be taken lightly.

The penitent must be helped to truly repent of his sins, for through repentance the door to forgiveness is opened for him. Repentance gives him a hope that is guaranteed by the authority of Christ, as well as the help he needs so that he himself can overcome his sins and weaknesses.

The spiritual father makes himself sensitive to the sins of the penitent in order to awaken the penitent's sensitivity and help it grow, thereby giving him the power to lift himself up out of his sins. Together with Christ, who lowered Himself to the level of man's powerlessness, the priest also descends, but in a descent that empowers. In order to bring about this opportunity to deepen his sensitivity and contrition, Christ asks that the penitent confess his sins, with the help of the spiritual father. He is also asked to confess so that he may receive the power to take a further step toward overcoming his weaknesses, as Tertullian says.

The force of sin that is lodged in the penitent's weaknesses, a force that has become like a second nature to him, is not something that can be dissolved, however, by an emotional experience lasting a quarter of an hour or a little longer, depending on the length of the confession. If this power of sin is to be dismantled, the emotional experience hostile to sin must take concrete form in deeds and attitudes opposed to these weaknesses, in order to weaken the habits they have created and form other habits within the person's nature. At this point, the phase of confession comes to an end, and there begins the phase of the penitent's repentance; this phase helps him to develop his contrition and regret for the sins committed and to deepen his decision to sin no more.

ii. The *Epitimia* (Penances) Recommended by the Priest

In recommending these deeds and attitudes, the priest's role becomes of primary importance. If, when he was hearing the confession, the priest exercised the role of an understanding friend, mixed with that of a judge and physician who assays the nature and gravity of the various things confessed to him, now he exercises the double role of judge and physician who weighs the appropriate means for healing the underlying weaknesses that have come to light. He is a judge not in the sense of someone who hands down sentences but in the sense of someone who comes to make decisions—lovingly and for the good of the penitent, and with all the skill of a spiritual doctor—about the worth of the means appropriate to the person's healing. This judicial activity is simply the work of appraisal placed at the service of the work of the physician.

The priest prescribes a "canon" or "*epitimia*"; that is, he applies the canons prescribed for different kinds of sins, canons whose purpose is not to punish but to heal the penitent. In this phase of the mystery, the indispensability of the priest becomes even more obvious due to the simple fact that the penitent cannot prescribe for himself his own medicine, nor can anyone else who is a mere fellow Christian do this with the authority needed to insure that the prescribed remedy is carried through to completion. These medicines must be given to the penitent in the name of the Lord, who is represented by a person different from the penitent himself and who, having been chosen by Christ, bears the authority of the Lord, particularly that of indicating which remedies correspond to the will of Christ. If the penitent himself, or simply any other person, were to prescribe these, he might be either too indulgent or too severe in the choice of means that he recommended. Through his spiritual reading, his observation of the different spiritual processes, and his experience, the spiritual father is expected to have a formation that allows him not only to give the most effective counsels with a certain degree of assurance but also to persuade the penitent about their worth so that the latter will let himself be persuaded to follow them.

The tradition of the Church knows no unforgivable sins. The Savior's words "If you forgive the sins of any" (John 20:23) have been understood to apply universally, and the Fathers, especially Hermas[16] and Augustine,[17] consider that all sins are forgiven through this mystery. The Apostle Paul forgives the incestuous Corinthian (1 Cor 5:1–5; 2 Cor 2:7), subjecting him first to an *epitimia*, and the Apostle John brought back to repentance a young man who had become the leader of a band of brigands and was guilty of all manner of crimes.[18] According to the testimony of St. Irenaeus, certain women who had been seduced into unchastity by the Gnostic Marcus were received back at a public confession,[19] while Dionysius of Corinth declares that all who return must be received back, regardless of any sin or heresy of any kind.[20]

The Church condemned the Montanists, who disputed the Church's right to forgive those guilty of murder, adultery, or idolatry; and also the Novatianists, who thought that not only were these sins unforgivable but all grave sins—and indeed, according to some historians, even lesser sins. The Church likewise condemned the Donatists, who affirmed at the time of the persecutions that the *traditores* (those who had betrayed the faith) were not to be forgiven.

Although in the Gospel of Matthew (12:31–32) blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is said to be something that will never be forgiven, or in the First Epistle of John (5:16) the distinction is made between those sins which are mortal and those which are not mortal, the former are to be understood as the hardening of heart in those who do not wish to repent of their sins.[21] In the Epistle to the Hebrews (6:4–10 and 10:26–29), there are harsh words for those who, knowing Christ and having received His grace in baptism, have fallen away completely from Him; hence stress is laid on how difficult it will be for them to be renewed once they have grown used to not taking Christ seriously (they have "trampled the Son of God underfoot," Heb 10:29). Nevertheless, the possibility of forgiveness is still admitted, for even the Epistle to the Hebrews (6:12) acknowledges the possibility of a certain delay in the fulfillment of Christ's will.

Although all sins are forgiven through this mystery, the reception of Holy Communion, however, is deferred in the case of grave sins in which there is no evidence of a contrition that matches the gravity of the sins committed, and in which the penitent has not first demonstrated such contrition through his deeds or sought healing for the weaknesses that were created in him in the wake of these sins, weaknesses that will cause their repetition. The obligation to no longer commit grave sins already confessed must be demonstrated through contrary attitudes and deeds and through various reparations. The priest requires all these based on the words of the Savior, who declared that it is not enough that someone promise God that he will henceforth live his life as a gift dedicated to Him, but rather that, having made this promise, he is to first go and be reconciled with his accuser (Matt 5:23–25).

Hence, even from the earliest times the Church established a time of penance in order to curb and heal the consequences of certain grave sins, such as homicide (including abortion), the unchastity of the unmarried, adultery, apostasy and heresy, and serious misappropriations of the goods of others in different open and violent forms (robbery, commercial fraud, usury, exploitation of the weak, etc.).

The spiritual father is only able to absolve the penitent or else to find that he cannot yet be absolved until he has freed himself inwardly from the bonds of his sin and opened himself to the possibility of a communion between himself and the Church, between himself and Christ. This too is an act of complete faith in Christ and in the Church. Hence, as at baptism and the Eucharist, the penitent is asked about his faith, because someone who is outside the Church cannot be received either to the Eucharist or to the mystery of repentance, which is a necessary precondition to receiving the Eucharist.

In the light of this fact, we can understand why the Orthodox Church cannot accept *intercommunion*. The Eucharist is not only the imparting of the body of Christ in Communion but also, in a special way, the common offering of the sacrifice on the part of those who partake of Communion. This, however, implies that they too are offering themselves as a sacrifice in Christ. For this to happen, they must be wholly identified with Christ and with one another in faith. Hence before the offering of the sacrifice, the community confesses its faith "with one mind" and on this basis shows forth its unity in love. And after the Creed the priest says, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you."[22] Those who offer sacrifice are already within the communion of faith and hence within the communion of the Holy Spirit, on the basis of their communion in faith. The penitent himself must be reestablished in this communion so that he can take part in the offering of Christ's sacrifice, of which he partakes by Communion.

The community also attests that this penitent, by his own will, has set himself outside the communion of the Church. It accepts this situation with pain, until the person in question provides proofs on his part that he has indeed, and in a stable way, broken with these sins and so has reestablished inwardly his communion with Christ. This is how the Church defends herself against the disintegrating effects that someone whose actions work to destroy her unity might have upon her. Thus even the spiritual father requires the penitent to carry out certain deeds by which the covenant of faith and moral life can be reestablished with the community of the Church.

The Church has set up this "penitential discipline" on the basis of the New Testament passages cited above and more clearly on 1 Corinthians 5:9–12:

> I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person. For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside?

Thus the priest works also in the name of the community through the mystery of repentance, which implicitly gives him its assent, as it does to all his acts.

The role of the means that the priest prescribes for the healing of those with grave sins shows itself not only in the fact that the *epitimia* are adapted to the number and kind of the sins, to the situation and capacity of each penitent, but also in that they can be abbreviated when the priest observes in the penitent a special zeal to break inwardly with the habit of sin, or when the penitent is threatened by the approach of death. Whereas St. Basil the Great prescribes a separation from the Eucharist for a period of seven years for fornication, of fifteen years for adultery, and of twenty years for murder, canon 102 of the Council of

Trullo asks that the rigorous application of the older canons be carried out only in extreme cases:

> It behooves those who have received from God the power to loose and bind, to consider the quality of the sin and the readiness of the sinner for conversion, and to apply medicine suitable for the disease, lest if he is injudicious in each of these respects he should fail in regard to the healing of the sick man. For the disease of sin is not simple, but various and multiform, and it germinates many mischievous offshoots, from which much evil is diffused, and it proceeds further until it is checked by the power of the physician. Wherefore he who professes the science of spiritual medicine ought first of all to consider the disposition of him who has sinned, and to see whether he tends to health or (on the contrary) provokes to himself disease by his own behavior, and to look how he can care for his manner of life during the interval. And if he does not resist the physician, and if the ulcer of the soul is increased by the application of the imposed medicaments, then let him mete out mercy to him according as he is worthy of it. For the whole account is between God and him to whom the pastoral rule has been delivered, to lead back the wandering sheep and to cure that which is wounded by the serpent; and that he may neither cast them down into the precipices of despair, nor loosen the bridle towards dissolution and astringency, or by greater softness and mild medicines, to resist this sickness and exert himself for the healing of the ulcer, now examining the fruits of his repentance and wisely managing the man who is called to higher illumination. For we ought to know two things, namely, the things which belong to strictness and those which belong to custom.[23]

The later Fathers proceeded to shorten in important ways the time for excluding penitents from Holy Communion. Thus "Theodore the Studite knows of no *epitimia* that continue for longer than three years, and it is only when confronted with sinners who are not repentant that it is necessary to have recourse to the rigorous ancient canons [namely, those of Basil the Great]."[24] John the Faster, who according to some was the patriarch of Constantinople at the end of the sixth century and according to others an ordained monk of the eleventh century,[25] reduces the *epitimia* for sins of fornication to a period of two to three years for those under thirty years of age and to three to four years for those older than thirty years.[26] Nevertheless, if these sins were not sins of unnatural vice, the period of the *epitimia* could be further shortened to a year or even half a year, obviously on condition that during this time the penitent ceased to commit these sins. In the case of those who retain their sins, the spiritual father also retains them. Killings (including abortions) and cases of incest receive *epitimia* of up to twelve or fifteen years.[27] Among the *epitimia* laid down by Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain, some are by nature reparations: "If a woman aborted her child, give her the canon [in addition to those of John the Faster] to feed a poor child, if she can afford it . . . Tell the murderer that, as the Holy Patriarch Athanasius and the Emperor Andronikos I Vlastares have established, he has to divide his wealth among his children and one part to give to the widow and to the poor children left behind. If the man who was murdered had none [wife or children], let him give that part as alms in memory of the murdered man's soul, and let him pray to God fervently so that the cry of the victim's blood for retribution may stop."[28]

Today, when many people receive Communion only rarely, the fact of being excluded from Holy Communion for a year or two or even three is not felt to be effective as a penance. More effective is the insistence that a person abstain from committing the particular sins confessed and assume certain corresponding acts of reparation.

Because these recommendations are intended for the spiritual healing of the penitent, they too can be shortened or lengthened depending on whether the penitent performs them with zeal or displays an attitude of neglect toward them. Consequently, the spiritual father must maintain a spiritual connection or friendship with the penitent, and this friendship itself can be of great use to the latter.

It must also be noted that the effectiveness of the recommendations given by the spiritual father depends to a large degree on whether the spiritual father himself is living his life in conformity with them. He will not have the authority to demand these acts of abstention and discipline from the penitent if he does not observe them himself. Hence the *Euchologion* gives the following advice to the spiritual father:

> He who takes upon himself the difficult task of a confessor has the duty to be an image and example to all: abstinent, humble, eager to do good works, praying to God at all times to receive the word of understanding and knowledge so that he may be able to

> bring those he shepherds to the right path. First of all he is to . . . fast on Wednesday and Friday throughout the year according to Church canons . . . so that on the basis of his good deeds, he can order others to do the same. For if he is without knowledge, is not abstinent, and is a lover of flattery, how can he teach others good deeds? Who would be so ignorant as to obey what he says when he himself is without order, or if he is a drunkard, how can he teach others not to become drunk? . . . He who is like this will be punished according to Church law as one who broke the divine canons. For not only did he damage himself, but also all those who confessed to him, because they remain unconfessed; everything that he bound or loosed is in fact not loosed, according to canons 6 and 43 of the Council of Carthage.[29]

iii. The Absolution Given by the Priest to the Penitent

The third and last phase of the mystery is the *absolution from sin* proclaimed by the spiritual father. He asks Christ to free the penitent from his bonds, then adds his own absolution as well. This shows that the one who forgives the penitent at that moment is in fact Christ, but it is the priest's prayer that effectively makes present the forgiveness that comes from Christ. That Christ's forgiveness comes through the prayer of the priest shows simultaneously the humility and the necessity of the priest's position, for he is the one who says the prayer so that forgiveness may come about. The additional element of the priest's absolution is a kind of attestation, through the priest's prayer as authorized representative of the Church and visible instrument through whom Christ celebrates the mystery, that forgiveness has truly been granted by the Lord.

In this sacrament there is no further material element beyond the hand and the stole of the priest, which he lays upon the head of the penitent. The stole (*epitrachelion*) is a sign that the priest has been sent by Christ and the Church, and also a sign also of the responsibility that has been placed upon his shoulders. Through the body and liturgical vestment of the priest, the grace of Christ comes upon the penitent just as once it flowed through the body and the garments of the Lord to those who sought His help with faith. Ultimately, grace comes upon the recipient's being as much through the hand of the priest as it does through the material elements present in the other mysteries.

Nevertheless—given the exceptional spiritual interpenetration that occurs between spiritual father and the penitent in this mystery, an interpenetration where Christ Himself is present in the course of the penitent's confession and the priest's counsels to him—it may be possible to say that this intimate encounter itself constitutes the "matter" through which the Holy Spirit is at work in this sacrament. For because each of the two has opened himself up with exceptional warmth toward the other, the Spirit is present as the Spirit of communion, the Spirit who unites the two into one, sowing himself in them as a single Spirit. The hand and the *epitrachelion* of the priest laid upon the head of the penitent could then be the expression and visible crowning of that spiritual communion that has come about between them, a communion in which the priest is the instrument through whom the Spirit of Christ is present, whereas the penitent is the one within whom the Spirit of Christ penetrates. The mystery in general is here also shown to be the unity formed by two or more in Christ. It is also a mystery when two persons are united in marriage through the agency of the Holy Spirit who is invoked by the priest, for it is only in God that the many can be one.

Pavel Florensky, in his explanation of the Lord's words "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matt 18:20), says, "'Two' is not 'one plus one,' but something essentially greater, something essentially more manifoldly significant and powerful. 'Two' is a new compound of spiritual chemistry, where 'one plus one' (the leaven and meal of the parable) is transformed qualitatively and forms a third thing (the leavened whole)."[30] In this new, higher quality, they come to know through experience the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, the mysteries of the love that unites. It is due to this fact that they can bind and loose.

> The knowledge of mysteries, or, more particularly, the power to bind and to loose is again the co-asking of two who have agreed on earth as touching anything, i.e., of two who have fully humbled themselves the one before the other, who have fully overcome contra-dictions, contra-thoughts, and contra-feelings to reach consubstantiality the one with the other. Such co-asking is always fulfilled, says the Savior. Why is this so? It is because the gathering of two or more in the Name of Christ, the co-entering of people into the mysterious spiritual atmosphere

> around Christ, communion with His grace-giving power transforms them into a new spiritual essence, makes of two a particle of the Body of Christ, a living incarnation of the Church . . . It is clear that Christ is then "in the midst of them." He is "in the midst of them" like a soul in the midst of every member of the body that it animates.[31]

It must be made clear that the encounter of the priest and the penitent has become an encounter in the name of the Lord, because the penitent recognizes the priest as the visible instrument of Christ; thus the covenant between them in Christ is facilitated by the presence of the priest. Accordingly, although the penitent, from where he stands in need of forgiveness, also participates in the prayer of forgiveness, the prayer of both finds its point of unity within the prayer of the priest and so is fulfilled as a priestly prayer with which the penitent is in agreement. In the priest's position as point of convergence, the primacy of Christ is manifested in this covenant or agreement. This primacy also manifests itself in the fact that forgiveness is imparted through the priest's declaration of absolution, accompanied by the placing of his hand and his *epitrachelion* upon the head of the penitent.

CHAPTER 6

ORDINATION: PRIESTHOOD AS THE LIVING IMAGE OF CHRIST

A. The Distinction between Ordination and the Other Mysteries

In each mystery, through His own activity, Christ gives the gift of Himself to those who believe in Him, and in the mystery of the Eucharist He makes this gift of Himself through His very body and blood. But because Christ cannot be seen, and because His will is that these gifts—namely, His body and blood—be given to us in a visible form, they must be given to us through persons who can be seen. He Himself chooses these persons and sanctifies them through the mystery of ordination. Thus, if in the other mysteries Christ is received as the one who gives us the gift of Himself through the priest, in the sacrament of ordination He pledges Himself as subject who is given to us invisibly by a human person; by consecrating this person as a priest or bishop, He makes His self-giving visible to us through the other sacraments. Whereas the other sacraments represent the visible means through which the priest mediates to us either a power from among the powers Christ imparts to us or else His very body and blood, the priesthood stamps a particular quality upon the visible person himself who carries out these means, a person through whom Christ imparts the gift of His powers or His body and blood in those mysteries.

If Christ had given Himself visibly to us or if He were not a person, indeed there would be no need for a person who could perform the visible acts by which the Lord gives Himself to us. But because He gives Himself invisibly, Christ as subject seeks a visible form for Himself—or another subject as His visible form—through whom He can give Himself to us. A mystery, as means of a grace of Christ, cannot happen on its own. The priest, as the personal instrument of the mysteries, implies the personal character of Him who invisibly gives these mysteries their powers.

Without a human subject who might represent Christ as subject in a visible form, Christ as Person could not distribute His gifts, nor could He give His very self in the other sacraments, as He can through visible means. His self-giving could only happen in an invisible manner. This, however, would keep us locked into uncertainty as to whether Christ had really given Himself to us, or if we were simply the prey of various subjective illusions. We would not experience Christ as a subject distinct from ourselves in the person of the priest, who comes to meet us in the name of Christ. In any case, this state of affairs would feed an inescapable individualism that would destroy any unity of faith and hence the very purpose and assurance of any real revelation, of any salvation in Christ as a real fact. The Church and salvation in Christ thus depend on the priesthood.

The priest and bishop are instruments of the Church as a community. Through them the faithful receive the rest of the sacraments, or, through the sacraments celebrated by priests, the faithful simply attach themselves to the Church. Ordination makes the one who receives it a representative of the Church and celebrant of the mysteries through which the Church continues to exist and grow in space and time. Moreover, ordination is *par excellence* the mystery of the Church by the fact that it is the mystery that, through priests, makes Christ experienced as subject, distinct from the faithful. *Ordination is the precondition of the other mysteries, although it cannot fulfill its own mission without them.* At the beginning Christ was sent as the High Priest, and when He could no longer be seen physically, He left the apostles and their successors as visible high priests and as His instruments.

But if the priest and bishop are visible instruments through whom Christ Himself, as subject, imparts His gifts and His very self to those who believe, it is evident that they cannot take from within themselves this quality of being Christ's instruments in the imparting of His powers. Neither can the Christian community impose these instruments upon Christ so that through them He Himself can impart the gift of His powers and His very self. But because the very acts on which the Church's existence depends are celebrated by the priest or bishop, the mystery of ordination, through which these persons are consecrated as celebrants, is a precondition for the extension and preservation of the Church. From the very moment of their ordination, the priest and bishop are established as centers and visible, intermediating means for the graces through which the Church is sustained, inasmuch as they are instruments of Christ, who is her invisible center and source. Their ordination, however, is not something that occurs outside the community but rather within its very bosom; it is carried out by those who are authorized to conduct the affairs of the community, that is, by the existing bishops, and bestowed upon those chosen from among the members of the Church. Moreover, the community guarantees that those who are ordained have been given to the Church through the agency of Christ Himself, for they are raised up to this status and role through a visible act performed by the existing bishops of the Church. This has continued since the time of the apostles: the Spirit of Christ makes certain members of the community priests and bishops, through the mediation of its existing bishops, who are successors of the apostles, and through the mediation of their prayer, which is accompanied by the prayer of the Church.

In the plan of creation, man was created as a subject according to the image of the Logos and as His partner. Man's mission is to gather within himself the reasons (*logoi*) of creation and to give them a rational conception in his own mind in order to offer them to the Logos, just as the Logos had already offered them as gift and content accessible to and necessary for the human spirit. In the same way, the priest and bishop are subjects according to the image of the incarnate Logos, who Himself has become, through His Incarnation, the fully restored Priest. They are to be the servants of this Priest in His work of gathering scattered humanity together in Himself. They do this through the sacramental, priestly empowerment imparted to them; through the spread of Christ's teaching, which brings unity to the world; and by guiding human beings on the path toward the incarnate Logos.

B. The Invisible Priesthood of Christ, Source of the Visible Priesthood of the Church

For the priest to be a personal image of the incarnate Word, it is necessary that Christ Himself be the original Priest and the source of the priesthood. In fact, through the Incarnation the very Word of God has become the Priest of creation *par excellence*; of the offering of creation to God; and of the renewed gathering together in God of all human beings, who had lost their primordial unity and been scattered abroad. But because human beings exist in this scattered state of disunity and arrogant, individualistic self-affirmation, not all of them can function as the priests of Christ's unifying activity. Christ, who became man in order to effect this gathering—an act at which humanity had suffered defeat—is the complete and unique Priest, because He is the only man who can give Himself to the Father with a devotion that is absolute. He does not merely wait, as before the Incarnation, for men to gather together in Him, in their common quality and role as priests, or for them to also gather creation together in this way, because men have not responded to this expectant waiting. Instead, He becomes man, wholly immaculate due to the power of His divine hypostasis, and hence *the central man*, the only man who has entry before the Father and can also take us there in Himself; He is the only human being truly able to bring about unification, for He did not become man for His own sake, enclosed within a limited human hypostasis, but rather He assumed human nature within a hypostasis opened wide to the whole of humanity. Thus He has become the only effective priest, remaining also God, in whom He—as priest and hence as man—gathers men effectively together into one. Only thus can He give eternal life back to human beings, as life in God. He remains thus a Priest forever, the only complete Priest, the only man in whom we have entry before, and the possibility of being seated beside, the Father. And because after His Ascension He cannot be physically seen, Christ, as the unique and perfect Priest, is the source of the entire visible priesthood.

The Triune God entrusted Christ with this mission as the only complete Priest, and Christ also gave it to Himself as God, not as man, because as man He received it. "Emmanuel has therefore become High Priest for us; through Him we are being offered to God the Father, and we have been renewed in accord with what we were in the beginning."[1] As High Priest He offers us in Himself as a righteous gift or a sacrifice well pleasing to God. For first He offers our humanity, which He assumed in a pure way. But by uniting Himself with us, He purifies us and offers us too as a pure gift to God. "When Christ became our High Priest and through Him we were offered intelligibly [not sensibly] in a sweet-smelling fragrance to God and the Father, then we were deemed worthy of His benevolence, and we have the sure pledge that death will no longer have any dominion over us."[2] Death will no longer have dominion because, by offering us to God as pure sacrifices, He fills us with His Godhead. And in the close union realized between us and God, we have the fountain of permanent and everlasting life.

Just as Aaron and Melchizedek—themselves anticipated types of Christ as High Priest—did not take the priesthood from within themselves, neither did Christ take the priesthood from Himself. Only the man sanctified by God can enter before God. The one who is not consecrated cannot enter before God, because such a one cannot sanctify himself. Christ as man was sanctified by God inasmuch as He became a pure man through the initiative of the Word of God and through the working of the Holy Spirit, by the will of the Father.

> It is necessary for us to know that the Son Himself, the Word of God the Father, cannot be said to have been a Priest as Officiator if it was not understood that He became like us. And as He was called *Apostle* [Heb 3:1] and *Prophet* [Luke 7:16] on account of His humanity, so was He also called *Priest* [Heb 5:6]. For He needed the image of service in order to perform the works of service, that is, the *kenosis*. For He who is in the image of the Father and equal with Him, He before whom stand the Seraphim and whom a multitude of angels serve, humbled Himself, and because of this it is said that He is also the Officiator of the mysteries and of the true tabernacle. It is then that He who is above all creation was also sanctified together with us . . . Therefore, of Him who sanctifies Himself as God, when He became man, made His abode among us, and became our brother as regards humanity it is said that He sanctifies Himself together with us. Thus the need to serve as priest and to be sanctified together with us pertains to the economy of the Incarnation.[3]

C. Priesthood and the Unity of the Church

Just as the Son of God has come in the flesh to open up for us in Himself entry before the Father and is thus the only man in whom we are united with the Father and among ourselves, in the same way Christ makes use of men in the flesh and of one of these for each community of believers in order to keep us in union with Himself. But this man must partake in Christ's holiness so that Christ's holiness can extend itself through Him as a unifying power. The faithful must have in this man, taken from among them as Christ's human nature was taken from us, an instrument chosen from on high as a means of unifying them with Christ, whom he represents. Christ Himself works through priests, as the only Priest in the strict sense, for the visible and invisible unification of human beings in Himself. Having Christ the only Priest working through them, all priests are visible instruments of His unique priesthood. Christ has not taken humanity by the hand in vain; but because He no longer works visibly through His own hand, His hand is active through the hand of those through whom His invisible priesthood is extended into the visible plane. In the same way, because He no longer speaks His words visibly through His own mouth, He speaks them invisibly through the mouth of the visible instruments of His priesthood. He works through the hand of these as they perform all the sanctifying gestures and pronounce all the words and prayers of Him and to Him with the consciousness of serving Him, or of serving the Father with Him and through Him. The human body is important not only when the mysteries are received through it but also when they are celebrated, because the Spirit, coming forth from the body of Christ, is active through the human body.

The consecration or ordination of these men is precisely the act through which Christ, in a visible form, chooses and invests these men as the instruments through whom, when they celebrate the sacramental actions, He Himself will celebrate them invisibly; when they teach and pastor in His name, He Himself will teach and pastor through them. But through this act of consecration, they are not only enabled for this purpose, they are also laid under obligation. This means that they are invested with a "charism" or a "gift" so that they can officiate these works with seriousness, responsibility, and as an obligation, so that what they officiate Jesus Christ may officiate through them.

Priests are not only visible yet independent images of Christ as Priest but also the visible instruments of His invisible priesthood. The teaching that they communicate is not theirs; through their hand they are not communicating their own blessings and graces but those of Christ. Hence they have no reason to be proud of themselves. However, their hand and their mouth are not set in motion against their will but precisely through their will to make themselves servants of Christ. They are not passive instruments of Christ. Hence they too become worthy of honor. But the more completely they put themselves at the disposal of Christ's working through them, the more they are worthy of an even greater honor. In their greatest zeal their humility becomes apparent, and vice versa; that is, they are conscious that the power belongs not to them but to Christ. Hence if Christ as High Priest is a servant, how much more are priests servants of the redemptive service of Christ. They give nothing from within themselves except service. If they do not render this service with their whole heart, not only do they not fulfill the saving work of Christ as they should, but to a great degree they impede its fulfillment.

But Christ exercises His work as unique and unifying Priest not only through the fact that in each community His priesthood is exercised through a single instrument, but also through the fact that these instruments are themselves also gathered into unity, into their unique visible center. This is the bishop.

The bishop is the full representative of Christ, the unique and unifying high priest. Each bishop is the head of a local Church, the "head of the fullness of Christ."[4] For Christ invests him not only with the charism and the responsibility of the celebrating of the mysteries, which are also celebrated by the priest, but with the mystery of ordination as well, so that all the priests should have their priesthood through him and stand in obedience to him. If through consecration Christ makes a priest His visible instrument and image in the celebration of the other mysteries, He makes the bishop His visible instrument and image in the consecration of the visible instruments through whom He celebrates the other sacraments.

For this reason the bishop is *par excellence* the visible representative of Christ and works "according to the will of God in Christ."[5] Hence because the Church exists invisibly in Christ, it exists visibly in the bishop, Christ's plenary instrument: "*episcopus in Ecclesia et*

Ecclesia in episcopo."[6] "Without the bishop there can be no Church,"[7] for, without him, Christ has no visible instrument or image through whom He can ordain those who are to be the visible instruments in the celebration of the remaining sacraments, through which He adds new members to the Church and supports the life of the Church, His mystical body, in unity. Without the bishop there is no instrument through whom to consecrate the personal instruments of all the mysteries. Thus, "Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude [of the people] also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic [Universal] Church. It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize or to celebrate a love-feast [that is, the Eucharist] . . . Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it . . . But that which seems good to him [the bishop], is also well-pleasing to God."[8] "The bishop is the representative of the Father."[9] He takes the place of Christ visibly as teacher, priest, and pastor.[10]

In a summary of the opinions of the earlier Fathers of the Church on the bishop's role, Dositheus of Jerusalem says,

> The dignity of the Bishop is so necessary in the Church, that without him, neither Church nor Christian could either be or be spoken of. For he, as a successor of the Apostles . . . is a living image of God upon the earth . . . And he is, we suppose, as necessary to the Church as breath is to man, or the sun to the world . . . "What God is in the heavenly Church of the first-born [Heb 12:23], and the sun in the world, that every High Priest is in his own particular Church . . ."[11]
>
> The High Priest is also . . . the fountain of the Divine Mysteries and graces, through the Holy Spirit, and he alone consecrates the Holy Myron. And the ordinations of all orders and degrees in the Church are proper to him; and in a primary and highest sense he binds and looses . . . And he preaches the Sacred Gospel, and contends for the Orthodox faith.[12]

But this does not remove the bishop from the category of those who serve. The power exercised through him does not belong to him but to Christ. He more than anyone else must be overwhelmed by the fact that, although he is himself a mortal man like anyone else—or even weaker than many others—it is through him that the most complete saving activity of Christ is performed. He should feel overwhelmed by the responsibility for the Church that weighs upon his shoulders, but at the same time he must be conscious that the more he curbs his pride and the more he puts himself at Christ's disposal, the more this responsibility is fulfilled in him, lest he think that the Church depends on him. He must aspire to humbly identify his will all the more with the will of Christ, instead of pressing Christ into the service of his own pretensions to power. He will be all the more effective in his activity the more he contributes to making Christ more visible and more praised.

Bishops are also maintained in a spirit of humility because not one of them is independent or a master over the others, but each exists within the framework of the communion of all the bishops. Thus all of them together maintain unified the teaching of Christ and the liturgical and canonical order of the Church, which is the only Church through which Christ works and hence the only one through which the salvation of mankind is achieved. The bishops must obey Christ, but Christ is in the Church and has established that salvation may be worked out through her sacraments and that He may be made known as such through the teaching that the Church preserves unchanged—the teaching that the bishops together preserve, along with all the Church. The bishops meet in the one Christ through the communion among themselves, but also in their humble connection with the whole Church, the body of Christ, guarding themselves against the temptation to make of the communion among themselves a kind of separate body that defends its own worldly privileges. *Just as the primacy of a single person is a fallacy, so the primacy of a limited body of persons is just as much a fallacy*, if understood in this same spirit.

The episcopal communion, which can be seen in a more pronounced fashion in the episcopal synods of the local Churches and in their intercommunion, or—in exceptional cases—in an Ecumenical Council, inherits the spirit of the apostolic communion, which is consummated in a reciprocal way with humility. For the task of understanding Christ and of correctly proclaiming Him and of guiding the people of God toward salvation is so heavy that no individual would dare to fulfill it without the common counsel of the others.

Thus the unity represented by the priest as the center of the parish and by the bishop as the center of the eparchy does not become a single-handed effort but exists within the framework of the whole

Church. In the same way, the apostles, through the communion among themselves and through the greatness of their responsibility for the Church, were brought within the framework of the one Christ, who is the single and unique center of genuine effectiveness in matters of salvation; neither is Christ a solitary being but one of the Trinity.

> Peter asks one question [John 13:6], Philip another [John 14:8], Judas another [John 14:22], Thomas another [John 14:5], and someone else yet another; they do not all ask the same question, nor does one person ask them all, but each has a turn, one by one . . . Philip wants to say something but is too shy to do it on his own and enlists Andrew's help [John 12:22]. Peter wishes to ask a question but beckons to John and has him pose it instead [John 13:24]. Where is the insistence on rank here? The ambition to be first? What better way could there be for them to show that they were disciples of Christ, *the gentle and lowly in heart* [Matt 11:29], the servant for the sake of us, his servants, who ascribes to the Father all glory in all things that he might provide us with a model of humble orderly behavior?[13]

D. The Institution of the Priesthood; The Three Ranks of Priesthood from the Beginning of the Church

We have started out from priests as centers of the parochial units and risen to the bishops as centers of the local ecclesial units, and then further to the communion of the episcopacy in the synod, which is the visible center of the entire Church—and one and all are united in Christ. We began from the priests as the most concrete centers of the believing people. But the foundation of the unity of the Church was established historically from above, moving downward, and in fact the unity of the Church as a whole is preserved from above to below.

The initial foundation of the unity of the Church is Christ, the High Priest *par excellence* consecrated directly by God the Father through the Holy Spirit. Christ remains forever the foundation of the Church's unity, but not apart from visible instruments united among themselves and with Him—the unique High Priest *par excellence*. He has chosen the twelve disciples—the ones sent by Him, His apostles—just as He is the "one sent," or the "apostle," of the Father (Heb 3:1).

Through the apostles Christ gives a wider visible foundation to His Church for the time when He will have passed to an invisible plane. This foundation is wider because the Church too will spread out from the group of those who believed in Christ at the beginning and who prefigure the Church. But this foundation will remain a unitary one through the communion of the apostles in Christ, who remains with them. So that the visible unity of the Church might not find its ultimate center in the visible plane but in Christ, *Christ does not leave a single apostle or any successor of His as the center of the Church, but a community of apostles and bishops*, so that they may be conscious that their ultimate unity and that of the Church is in Christ, that He alone is the unique High Priest, and that He too is within the Trinity. All the bishops must transcend themselves within their higher unity in Christ.

Through the sending of Christ, and then through the election and consecration of the twelve apostles at Pentecost, the mystery of ordination is instituted. But the Savior indicates the content of the mission of those thus chosen and ordained, and of their successors, on all those occasions when He commands them and gives them the power to baptize, to forgive sins, to celebrate the Eucharist, and to utter in the light what they have heard from Him whispered in their ear (cf. Matt 10:27) and what they have seen when they have been with Him; finally, He urges them to observe all that He has commanded them (cf. Matt 28:20). Even in the definition that Christ gives of the different powers and activities of the apostles and their successors, we have another proof of their institution as bishops and priests. In John 20:22 Jesus transmits to the apostles and their successors the episcopal or sacerdotal power of forgiving sins through the act of breathing the Holy Spirit upon them, which is a pledge of ordination that will be given to them completely at Pentecost.

Inasmuch as Christ gave them His teaching the entire time He was with them and His deeds likewise filled up this same period, it can be said that through all His teaching and activity Jesus has indicated the content of their mission as visible instruments of His ongoing activity. For because He has sent them to teach and to celebrate the sacraments, He has assured them that He will be with them until the end of the age (Matt 28:20); that "he who receives you receives Me" (Matt 10:40); and that "it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you" (Matt 10:20). In this way He has shown that they are subjects through whom He Himself, as subject and source, communicates His own teaching and graces in the mysteries: He Himself is the High Priest, the Teacher, and the Pastor in them. Through all His teaching and saving activity, which was entrusted to the apostles and their successors in order to be offered and continued visibly, Christ has given content to the service to which the apostles and their successors have been called.

The apostles, following the example and commandments of the Savior and on the basis of His assurance that He would be with those who teach, baptize, and exhort until the end of the world, transmitted to their successors the mission given to them by the Savior. They did this through prayer and through the laying on of hands upon those called to the dignity of being their followers (Acts 14:23; 2 Tim 1:6). In the beginning, the name of "priests" (that is, "presbyters") and "bishops" was given to all those whom the apostles ordained as their successors (Acts 20:17, 28). As long as the Christian communities were small, far apart from one another, and largely found in cities, it may have been the case that these successors to the apostles were usually bishops in the strict sense and included within their ministry the quality of being priests. But as the Christian communities began to grow and spread to the villages, these bishops appear to have been endowed with the power to ordain priests as their helpers (Titus 1:5) and to supervise the activity of these priests (1 Tim 5:19).

As followers who hold the fullness of the apostolic grace, the bishops are not, however, equal in every respect to the apostles. The apostles possessed something that they were not able to transmit. This something belonged only to the twelve apostles: the fact of having accompanied Christ through the duration of His activity; and that of having been witnesses that this same Christ, whom they knew in an exact and complete way, has risen from the dead. Only those who accompanied Christ throughout His ministry have been able to truly witness that He has risen, or that the one who rose from the dead is Christ Himself, whom they saw after His Resurrection (Acts 1:21–22). As unique witnesses of His Resurrection, as those with full knowledge of Jesus, and thus as foundations of the faith of the Church (Eph 2:20), it was of great importance that they went everywhere to give this testimony and to communicate their knowledge about Him; it was also important that many of them go to the same places, that the witness of one might strengthen the testimony of another. As such, they were not bishops permanently located within a certain spot, although they had in themselves the fullness of grace. Precisely in order to give to the Churches founded by them permanent pastors so that they would be able to make the Churches in different locations grow and to maintain them, the apostles ordained bishops for such locations. When we say that the twelve apostles (those who accompanied Christ throughout His ministry and who saw Him risen) have been the witnesses *par excellence* of His Resurrection, we are not excluding the fact that besides them there were also other important witnesses; such persons were found especially among those who spent much time around Jesus but who were not, however, with Him all the time and hence did not know Him fully (1 Cor 15:6; Luke 10:1). This is why all faith in Christ has its ultimate basis in the apostles.

From the beginning the bishops have been able to be called priests as well, because in the grace of the episcopacy there is truly included that of the priesthood, and not vice versa. In this sense Peter, as bishop, also speaks of himself as a "fellow elder" (1 Pet 5:1), as does John (3 John 1:1).

Besides the bishops and priests established already by the apostles, the latter also established the first deacons through the laying on of hands (Acts 6:6). Their rank has continued ever since the time of the apostles (1 Tim 3:8–13).

Following the apostolic tradition, to the present day the Orthodox Church has preserved the three ranks of the hierarchy in the Church, as stages of a single special grace for each of them. In order to obtain the grace of a higher rank from among these, the grace of the lower rank must be obtained beforehand. The other ranks that have appeared in the course of time are not matters of "divine right," that is, they do not have a special grace. They are ranks of *cheirothesia* ("imposition of hands") rather than *cheirotonia* ("laying on of hands") and have only an administrative significance.

In any case, from the beginning of the Church the presbyters were not understood to be elders in the sense of men of advanced age. They also were not understood to have been chosen by the community without a special grace, as the Protestant tradition understands this, for they served as pastors of the other believers and received the Holy Spirit from the apostles, not from the community

(Acts 14:23; 2 Tim 1:6; Titus 1:5). Moreover, the Greek language has a separate word for "elder" (*geron*) when it wants to convey the notion of advanced age.

In celebrating the sacraments, the presbyter/priest in fact prays on behalf of the faithful, and it is in their names that he offers the bloodless sacrifice. He consecrates the holy gifts, performs all the sacraments, and does everything in the name of Christ (*in persona Christi*), being empowered by Him whose servant and representative he is, however unworthy. Inasmuch as Christ, as the true and unique Shepherd, chooses the priests as His instruments for the performance of the sacraments—transmitting to them grace and the power from the Father so that they may become priests, teachers, and shepherds and may exercise these three orders of Christ—the priests receive the priestly grace and power from Christ, not from the faithful, for the latter cannot procure for the priests a power that they do not have. "And we now have received a word of embassy, and we are come from God, for this is the dignity of the episcopate."[14]

St. Paul said the following to the "presbyters of the Church" (Acts 20:17) whom he had called to be with him at Miletus: "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). They were not pastors on the basis of a delegation from the faithful but on the basis of the power of the Spirit, received from the apostles (2 Tim 1:14; 2:1–2; 1 Tim 5–6).

E. The Spiritual Character of the Christian Liturgical Priesthood and the Priesthood of the Faithful

It is true that in the New Testament the believers who were ordained by the apostles, and later by the bishops, to the rank of presbyters are not called "sacrificers" or "priests" (ιερείς) as those of the Old Testament are called. This name was given to them only later. Based on this, Protestant Christians draw the conclusion that they were not, strictly speaking, priests (ιερείς) because any sacrifice of the kind that was linked to the service of a priest came to an end in Christ. In order to give a foundation to their refusal of priesthood, Protestants have found themselves forced to dispute the sacrificial character of the Eucharist. But St. Paul declares that Christians too have an "altar" upon which they offer sacrifice (1 Cor 9:13: θυσιαστήριον). He considers the body and blood of the Lord as such a sacrifice, which he sets against the animal sacrifices and also against the food and drink offered to the idols: "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons" (1 Cor 10:20–21).

At the beginning, Christians called these celebrants "presbyters" and not "sacrificers" (ιερείς) because this latter name was too closely linked with the idea of offering blood sacrifices of animals. Through this new name, Christians wanted to distinguish the servants of Christ from Judaic worship.

Compared to Jewish and pagan animal sacrifices, the sacrifice of Christ was ultimately a spiritual sacrifice (a voluntary self-offering). Because it was a spiritual and permanent offering of the Person of the risen Christ, those through whom this offering is visibly celebrated must themselves also offer it spiritually. For Christ continually offers Himself to this end so that these men too can be added to it as a sacrifice like His, and indeed, not only they but all the faithful. This *offering* consists in their dedication to God in a spiritual way, to the praise of God through words and deeds. But their sacrifice of praise through words and deeds can take place only if the sacrifice of the body and blood of the Lord is continuous and if we partake of it. Both are mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat . . . Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb 13:10, 15–16).

In order to actualize the sacrifice of Christ for the various communities, the only one through which Christians too are able to offer a sacrifice of praise, priests are necessary. But these priests must also perform their own spiritual offering together with that of Christ, and together with the faithful. The sacrifice of Christ does not work magically, because it does not produce its effect merely through the blood poured out formerly, like the blood of the sacrificial animals; rather, it works through the spotless blood of Christ—that is, His blood full of the power of the Spirit—which also fills those who partake of Christ with that same power to offer themselves to God.

Because they have in common with the faithful their spiritual offering from the power of Christ's sacrifice, *Christian celebrants are no longer separated from the faithful in the way in which the priests of the old law, or the pagan priests, were.* This is another reason why at the beginning of the Church Christians avoided calling these men by the name of "priests," as had been done in the Old Testament and in paganism.

All Christians in this sense are a "royal priesthood" (1 Pet 2:9). However, the sacrifices of Christians, or they themselves as sacrifices, must be joined to that of Christ. For only through Christ as sacrifice can they too enter before the Father as a sacrifice. An initiative is necessary on their part, for if they were made to be sacrifices by force, they could not be sanctified in their inner beings, just as neither the pagans nor the Hebrews were sanctified in this way. But someone must represent Christ, who offers Himself as a sacrifice on behalf of all; this person receives the particular sacrifices of the faithful in unity with the sacrifice of Christ and in the unity of the faithful among themselves, so that the Church's sacrifice in Christ may be realized. This someone is the priest of the New Testament. He receives the sacrifices and prayers of all and unites them with the sacrifice of Christ, which he offers in the name of all and for the sake of all. He brings the sacrifices and prayers of all within the framework of the sacrifice and prayer of the Church as a whole. The liturgical priests do not offer only their own personal sacrifices and prayers but those of the entire community and of all the faithful joined to the sacrifice of Christ. In the priest the unification of all is realized, as in the visible image of Christ, who offers Himself invisibly through the priest as a sacrifice.

Thus the priest of the New Testament is distinguished from the Old Testament priests and the pagan priests, who were mere offerers of animal sacrifices. He is also distinguished from them by the fact that, in accord with the preponderant importance that he possesses as the unifying spiritual factor, his mission also involves the preaching of the word and the pastoral care of the faithful in order to advance their spiritual formation; he must make use of these as a means of maintaining the unity of the faithful in Christ and in the Church, and as a means of bringing them more and more into conformity with the image of Christ.

These same ministries were also exercised by Christ as High Priest.

These ministries of the priest also contribute to the imprinting of Christ upon the very being of the faithful. The faithful also realize in this manner their universal priesthood with the help of the liturgical priesthood, not only as those who offer their own personal sacrifices but also in the dominion they manifest over their passions and in their role as teachers within their families and societies; they sanctify themselves through all these ministries and contribute to the sanctification of the world, even though they do not do this as certified representatives of the Church.

In the prayer that precedes chrismation, the priest asks that the one who is to be chrismated may be "pleasing [to God] in every word and deed" and that his soul be preserved "in purity and uprightness."[15] This signifies "the consecration, the complete placing of one's entire life in the ministry of the royal priesthood . . . Laymen do not have access to the means of grace (the power of celebrating the sacraments); on the other hand, their sphere is 'the life of grace,' its penetration into the world. This is the 'cosmic liturgy' in the world, already at work by the simple presence of 'sanctified beings,' of 'Trinitarian dwellings,'"[16] as those who are to be chrismated are called in the prayer that the bishops say to consecrate the chrism. In the second or third century, Minucius Felix declares, "He who snatches man from danger slaughters the most acceptable victim. These are our sacrifices, these are our rites of God's worship."[17] And Origen says,

> All those who have received the anointing are priests . . . each one carries his sacrifice within himself, and he himself puts the fire on the altar so that he becomes a continual sacrifice. If I renounce everything I own, if I carry my cross and follow Christ, I have made an offering on God's altar . . . If I love my brothers even to give my life for them, if I fight for truth and justice even to death, if I mortify myself . . . if the world is crucified to me and I to the world, I have offered a sacrifice on God's altar and I become the priest of my own sacrifice.[18]

In general, the believer, as a member of the royal priesthood who takes power from the sacrifice that the priest offers during the celebration of the Liturgy, "continues this act *extra muros*; he celebrates the

Liturgy through his everyday life . . . His presence in the world is like a continuation of the *epiclesis*, an invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the day ahead, upon the work and the fruits of the earth."[19]

The act of proceeding in a circle around the *analogion* that the priest performs with the child after his baptism and chrismation has the same significance. Whereas the candidate for priesthood proceeds in a circle around the holy table, showing his resolve to offer Christ as a sacrifice throughout the course of his life for the good of the faithful, as well as his resolve to celebrate the mysteries and to teach in the Church, the layman, or member of the universal priesthood, is dedicated to the ceaseless service of Christ outside the altar, in the world, through other means than those of the celebration of the mysteries; still, the layman also seeks to keep the world, as well as himself, in a circle around Christ.

If the priest is called to shape the faithful in the offering of these sorts of sacrifices and in dedicating their whole lives in this way to Christ, himself going before them as an example, we can say that the priesthood of the New Testament is the fulfillment of the incomplete priesthood of the Old Testament and of the pagan religions. In that incomplete priesthood, there was expressed, mostly through external acts, the hope for a genuine consecration of the world through true sacrifices, nourished from the perfect sacrifice of Christ.

But because the priests' ministry of teaching and pastoral care in fact contributes to the development of the universal priesthood of the faithful, to the maintenance of their unity in Christ (or their unity in the Church), and to the configuration of all according to the same unitary and authentic image of Christ, it must be exercised likewise in a unitary manner. In order to assure this unity of teaching, of sacramental celebration, and of pastoral care (or the formation of the faithful according to the image of Christ and their living out their own lives according to this image), it is necessary that the priests have a superior center invested with power from on high to preserve unchanged this teaching, celebration, and leading of the faithful, in conformity with the apostolic regulation of the Church. This higher center is the bishop. The Church has assured the dependence of priests upon the bishop in the first place by their ordination at the hands of the bishop. Through ordination priests receive the grace that signifies the right and power to celebrate the sacraments, to proclaim the teaching, and to administer pastoral care. Dependence on the bishop ensures the fulfillment of these services in the same manner throughout the whole eparchy, after the bishop has assured himself that those receiving ordination have acquired the capacity to carry out these activities in the proper manner.

The bishop of an eparchy, in his turn, must stand within a communion of the bishops of other eparchies so that the unity of teaching, of sacramental celebration, and of living out the gospel that he ensures in his own eparchy will be in harmony with the teaching, the sacramental celebration, and the apostolic living in the universal Church.

In order to ensure this unity, from the time of the apostles it was already established that every new bishop was to be ordained by three, or at least by two, other bishops and that before the ordination the candidate make a comprehensive confession of his faith, proving that it is the same faith as that of the bishops who are ordaining him in the name of the entire episcopacy of an autocephalous Church, which is in communion with the whole episcopal body of the universal Church. Thus he gives the assurance that he will take care that in his eparchy and under his guidance and teaching, the teaching of the Church of every time and place will be proclaimed, the same mysteries celebrated, and the life of the faithful directed according to the same evangelical norms as at the beginning of the Church. This detailed confession of faith is not required of the priest or deacon but only of the one who is to receive the grace of the high priesthood, so that he may guarantee the preservation of the teaching, of the established order of the sacraments, and of the canonical matters in the Church entrusted to his pastoral care.

F. Apostolic Succession

The transmission of this same grace from bishops to bishops, beginning from the apostles, together with the transmission of the power and the obligation of preserving the same teaching and the same sacramental and pastoral norms, is called the apostolic succession. According to the measure of their more limited ministries, all the priests of a given eparchy receive, through the bishop of the eparchy, this same grace that comes from the apostles; along with it they receive the power and the obligation to preach the same teaching and to preserve the same order in the celebration of the mysteries and in the pastoral care of souls along paths that are in harmony with the tradition that came down from the apostles. The Church thus always lives spiritually by the same apostolic grace, and by the same teaching and sacramental and evangelical practice of the apostles.

The bishops are the branches that, growing out from the same apostolic trunk, extend the grace and content of the apostolic life into all the smaller branches, represented by the priests; and into all the leaves and fruits, represented by the faithful.[20] Better said, the same sap—that is, Christ—spreads through the bishops and priests into the whole tree of the Church and is found directly in each of her members. Without the grace of the apostolic succession of the hierarchy and without the apostolic teaching transmitted together with it, there would be no baptized Christians; there would be no communion with Christ in the Eucharist; and there would be no knowledge of Christ in His activity in Christians, of how He has been present and exercised His activity in the whole of the past.

The interior factor of this succession is Christ Himself and His Holy Spirit, but the visible factor is the whole Church in her expansion throughout time and space, under the pastoral care of the bishops. John Karmiris says,

> It is necessary to add that the apostolic succession is not limited only to the uninterrupted historical line of bishops or to the succession of the apostolic teaching (*successio doctrinae*), but that it is also extended to the apostolic succession of the sanctifying service and dignity, as well as to the continuous and uninterrupted line of the generations of Christians from all ages, to the apostolic succession of the entire Church. The Church, after the death of the apostles, was the general and principal bearer of apostolicity and of the apostolic service, considering that the Spirit of Pentecost was imparted not only to the twelve apostles but also to the whole of God's people of the new covenant and to the whole Church through the multitude of gifts successively transmitted . . . In this larger sense, it can be said that there is an apostolic succession of all the faithful baptized in the Church on the basis of their calling to preserve the confession of faith and the apostolic teaching through their various gifts by which the faithful participate to a certain degree in the threefold dig-

> nity of Christ, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, who works in the Church.[21]

Concerning the apostolic succession of the hierarchy, there is a great deal of evidence from the beginnings of the Church. Clement of Rome proclaims, for example, "The apostles have preached the Gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ [has done so] from God. Christ therefore was sent forth by God, and the apostles by Christ."[22] Then the apostles, "preaching through countries and cities . . . appointed the first-fruits [of their labors], having first proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those who should afterwards believe . . . And afterwards [the apostles] gave instructions, that when these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry."[23] According to Hippolytus of Rome, the bishops are "their [the apostles'] successors, and as participators in this grace, high-priesthood, and office of teaching, as well as being reputed guardians of the Church."[24] And according to Eusebius of Caesarea, "The primates, the judges, and the councilors of the beautiful city [of the Church] have taken their mission from the apostles and disciples of the Savior, and from their succession, budding as if from a good seed, the leaders of Christ's Church even now shine forth."[25]

St. Irenaeus says that the apostles left bishops as successors in their places,[26] and indeed he affirms that the priests too "possess the succession from the apostles; those who, together with the succession of the episcopate, have received the certain gift of truth, according to the good pleasure of the Father."[27]

Through the apostolic succession of the episcopacy, the integral preservation of the apostolic teaching is ensured, that is, not only in its fixed form in the New Testament but also in its explicit form, which bears the name of holy tradition. This has been preserved through the apostolic succession in a form that is both oral and applied. "The truth was not delivered by means of written documents but *viva voce*," says St. Irenaeus.[28] And it is known that what is left in writing never covers all that is transmitted orally or by means of practical application. But the wealth of this oral and applied treasure cannot be appropriated from our predecessors except by those who have spent a long time with them. The apostolic succession of the hierarchy also implies time spent together by the young with the old, a practical discipleship.

The episcopal charism is the charism that bears in itself the power of transmitting all the graces and gifts that are diffused, beginning with the apostles, at all times in the Church; it is the power of transmitting Christ Himself and His Holy Spirit, present and active in these gifts and graces. If this is true, it need not be understood only as a channel that brings something ancient down to us but as a fire that is transmitted with the same power of warming; or it may be compared to the water of an always powerful river that penetrates into the new soil that it reaches and makes this soil fertile. The fire and the water of the graces have persisted in the Church from her very beginning. However, they do not come only from the past but also from above, in every age, for the Church is always open to heaven. They are the sun that gives warmth to persons in every generation, a sun whose rays are found in these persons but that penetrates them from above.

The Christ whom we receive today through the mysteries and through the teaching of priests ordained by bishops (and indeed through the teaching of our parents as well) we also feel present and alive in these persons, and thus He can penetrate into us too. He is not a Christ of the past except in the sense that He is the same Christ who has been living and active in all the previous generations as well. He is always alive. Through the apostolic succession, the eternal, living presence of Christ is ensured, the presence of the same Christ in an ongoing way in every generation. It is not Christ who passes into history but the generations of men. Yet all of these have been alive in Christ. And only in this same Christ are we too alive. But we receive the living Christ from those who live in Him, with whom we continue to live for a time in this living Christ. It is only that they have received Him a little before we have. The succession is likewise a continual concurrence.

The doctrine about Christ does not constitute the only content of the apostolic succession or of the tradition; in that case it would become a theoretical doctrine that could come to seem antiquated after a time. Nor does the grace of the mysteries, as the activity of Christ communicated to us, form the only content of tradition. In order for the activity of Christ to have its full effect within us, we must know in a broader way who He is and what it is that He asks of us. Only together do Christ's grace and teaching and the teaching about Christ transmit Him to us in His living and effective fullness.

Because Christ as God and as true man does not grow old, neither do His activity and the teaching about Him grow old. But the depiction of His infinite Person—infinite through His Godhead, and always relevant through His humanity, which was realized in the highest way—must be made understandable at the level of understanding proper to each age, in order to make evident His unique truth in its fullness. Hence St. John Chrysostom and St. Gregory of Nazianzus insisted on the importance of the teaching office of priests and bishops.

If the preservation and propagation of Christ's integral teaching belong to the ministry of the ordained ranks, the Orthodox Church cannot recognize as valid the ordinations of other Churches that have altered this teaching.

There can exist no succession of grace from the bishops who have fallen from this teaching to those whom they ordained. Otherwise we would fall into an understanding of grace as something magical; it would no longer be a spiritual force joined together with the true knowledge of God.

If the Orthodox Church recognizes the ordination of members of the Roman Catholic and ancient Oriental Churches, this is done on the basis of economy, in the case when these enter into the Orthodox Church and complete their faith, which had been damaged to some extent from the moment of their ordination. (The problem of those belonging to the hierarchy of the Old Catholic Churches would merit special consideration once the Orthodox Church had been assured that this Christian group had not fallen away from the integral teaching of the Church at all times.)

More difficult is the problem of the recognition of Anglican ordinations given the great variety and fluidity of the Anglican Communion not only in matters of teaching but also of the sacraments themselves. Because for some Anglicans the teaching about the sacraments has become diluted, not all think that the priesthood itself is necessary. For the time being, the Orthodox Church is waiting for progress on the part of the Anglican Communion toward greater unity and firmness in their doctrine, in a spirit of increased proximity to the teaching of the Orthodox Church.

Ordination makes those who possess it capable of transmitting the grace of the mysteries to other believers of the Church not because of the personal worthiness of these priests and bishops but in their quality as representatives of the Church and witnesses of her faith. This is one of the explanations for the Church's teaching that the mystery of ordination cannot be repeated, and that priests and bishops who have been defrocked or who have fallen into heresy can come back to be valid celebrants of the mysteries and have their canonical punishments lifted and their place at the bosom of the Church restored. The capacity to celebrate the sacraments validly with which they were invested became inactive when they left the environment of grace found within the Church, but it was not totally abolished in them.

This explanation must be completed, however, with another observation: that the mystery of ordination, like those of baptism and chrismation, places a man within a certain fundamental relationship with Christ. And in this the sacrament is distinct from the Eucharist and marriage, which strengthen this relationship on the conscious plane of consciousness; and from repentance and holy unction, which restore the relationship. This relationship is imprinted upon the being of the man and leaves in him certain traces, even without his willing them. This is in some way analogous to the mark left on the married couple by the relationship established between them through a lifelong marriage. Hence the mystery of marriage too is in general considered indissoluble, and the Church does not gladly approve of a second marriage, even less of a third.

G. The Visible Aspects of Ordination and the Invisible Power It Bestows

The celebrant of the mystery is the bishop of the eparchy or his delegate—who must be a bishop—in the case of the ordination of priests and deacons who will serve within the eparchy. In the case of the ordination of a bishop, three bishops, or at the very least two, who represent the episcopacy of the respective autocephalous Church are the celebrants. This maintains the unity of the priests in the eparchy, and of the faithful who receive the sacraments from them, within the one Christ represented by the bishop; it also maintains the unity of the bishops among themselves in the high priesthood received from the same Christ's high priesthood and from His Spirit, a high priesthood similar to that of the apostles.

According to the tradition of the Orthodox Church, only members of the Church who are of the male sex can be ordained, and these men make a confession of the Church's faith and witness that they will fulfill on behalf of the Church the duties pertaining to the hierarchical rank into which they are introduced. According to the resolution of the Quinisext Council,[29] only those who are unmarried or widowed through the death of their spouse and who have become priest-monks beforehand can be admitted to the rank of bishop. For priests and deacons, marriage is not permitted after ordination.[30] Some situations may be detrimental to the authority of the priest.

These conditions required of those who receive ordination have a spiritual significance. The members of the hierarchy can only be men because they are called to be the visible instruments of Christ, the unique and invisible celebrant of the mystery, and Christ was a man. Women give birth to male children and raise them to be priests in the likeness of the Mother of the Lord. They are the mothers of priests and bishops, and through them God exercises the highest spiritual authority over their children:

> The relation so mysterious between mother and child causes woman—Eve, the source of life—to watch over every being, to protect life and the world. The question of knowing whether the woman will be wife, mother, or bride of Christ (*sponsa Christi*) is only secondary. Her charism of interiorized and universal "maternity" carries every woman toward the hungry and the needy and admirably defines the feminine essence: virgin or spouse, every woman is a mother for all eternity (*in aeternum*). The structure of her soul predisposes her "to protect" all that crosses her path, to discover in the strongest and most virile being a weak, defenseless child.[31]

In her tranquility the woman has an assurance and a capacity to instill trust in the man, who, above and beyond any demonstration of power, feels the need to be supported by a mother. Jesus entrusts John the Apostle to His Holy Mother, as if she were John's own Mother: "Woman, behold your son!" (John 19:26). The bishops have their own mothers, who guide them with their intelligence and the strength of their faith. Thus it can be said that the support of woman is implied in the priesthood of the man.[32] In the catacombs of St. Callixtus, a man, a bishop, extends his hands over the Eucharistic bread, but behind him stands a woman in prayer, an *orans*.[33] The man without the woman loses himself in abstraction; the woman keeps him connected to life, which has its basis in the divine life, in the Holy Spirit.

The roles cannot be mixed.

The bishop must be unmarried so that his service may consist not only in the personal celebration of the mysteries and in the personal instruction of Christians in matters of the faith but also in the supervision of these same services on the part of the priests as his helpers. His being must be wholly occupied with the care of the Church. Thus he is to forget any other interest of his own or of his family, in the likeness of Christ, whose full representative he is.

If through the other sacraments a foundation is laid for the new personal life, or this life is furthered, priestly and high priestly service is accorded to those who have this life already and have given proof of their authentic collaboration with the grace given for the strengthening of this life in their being.

The service of the three hierarchical ranks, or orders, is linked to the Liturgy because the obligation incumbent upon the members of these ranks consists principally in the celebration of the mysteries and the teaching of the people, and the culmination of the mysteries is the Eucharist, which is celebrated in the Holy Liturgy. Moreover, throughout the whole course of the Liturgy, instruction is given in a primary way.

No one can reach one of the higher ranks in the hierarchy without having passed through the lower ones, beginning with the lowest—that of the diaconate—nor can anyone be ordained within the same Liturgy from the lowest of these ranks to the highest rank. For if the rank of bishop were to be given at the beginning, the priesthood and diaconate would be confused with it and could no longer be bestowed in a special way; and if the diaconate were bestowed at the beginning of the Liturgy, then later the priesthood and then the episcopacy, the bishop would not be able to celebrate the whole Liturgy at once.

Hence the ordination of the deacon takes place after the transformation of the holy gifts so that it would make no sense for him to become a priest in the course of the same Liturgy, because he would no longer have the power to officiate at the transformation of the holy gifts, which is the essential point of the Holy Liturgy; nor would he be able to put into practice in the same Liturgy the principal office of the deacon, which is that of assisting the priest in giving Communion to the faithful. In the same way, the ordination of a priest takes place after the entry with the holy gifts in order to fulfill immediately at the same Liturgy the service of their transformation—the essential act of the Liturgy and of the priestly service within the Liturgy. But after that it would make no sense for him to be advanced to the rank of hierarch because he would no longer have anything to do, in that same Liturgy, as hierarch. For the same reason, the bishop is ordained after the singing of the Trisagion so that he can supervise immediately at the same Liturgy the readings from the Epistle and the Gospel, which represent the teaching ministry that is so essential to the bishop, and then so that he can officiate at the transformation of the gifts.

The candidates for the two lower ranks are brought into the altar, that is, to the ministry of the sacrifice of Christ: the future deacon by two deacons, and the future priest by two priests. These lead the candidates around the holy table three times, and during each of these circlings the candidates kiss the four corners of the holy table and the hand of the ordaining hierarch, who is seated on a throne placed on the western side of the holy table. The candidates kiss his hand, his *omophorion*, and his *epigonation*, also making three prostrations before him. The future deacon is lead three times around the holy table by two deacons, which signifies the initiation of the future deacon into his diaconate and a certain acceptance of the new deacon into the order of their ranks. The conducting of the candidate for the priesthood by the two priests has an analogous meaning.

By circling three times around the holy table and kissing its corners, the future deacon and priest show that their concern and love will move without interruption throughout their entire lives around Christ, who is present invisibly on the holy table and visibly in the person of the bishop seated beside it.

Through the three prostrations made by each before the bishop and by kissing the *omophorion*, the *epigonation*, and his right hand, the candidates for the diaconate and the priesthood demonstrate their will to obey their bishop, who in a visible way represents Christ. The *omophorion* is the sign of his pastoral care for the people; the *epigonation* is the sign of his spiritual power; and his right hand is the instrument through which Christ Himself transmits His activity in the sacraments that the bishop celebrates.

The deacon then genuflects on his right knee before the holy table, placing his hands one upon the other and resting his head upon his hands. He shows in this way that he gives himself now as a living sacrifice to Christ, for Christ is always found upon the holy table as a sacrifice.

The hierarch then takes off his miter to show that it is not he as a man who will invest the candidate with the power of the diaconate but Christ Himself. He places his right hand on the head of the candidate, as the instrument (the "matter") through which the grace of Christ is transmitted, and says the words, "The divine grace, which always heals that which is infirm and fulfills that which is lacking, through the laying on of hands, elevates the devout subdeacon *N.* into deacon. Therefore, let us pray for him, that the grace of the All-Holy Spirit may come down upon him."[34] Although the grace of the diaconate is transmitted through the hand of the bishop, he declares humbly that it is the grace itself that elevates this man to the rank of the diaconate. But these words are only the introduction to the following prayer that follows and that is said by the bishop, who asks all those who are within the altar to join him in this prayer. In the celebration of the mystery, the bishop does not isolate himself but stands within the communion of the Church. In the first prayer he asks of Christ that He Himself "might bestow His grace" upon the one designated for the office of deacon. In a second prayer the hierarch asks of Christ that He Himself "fill the one who has been made worthy to enter the work of a deacon, by the visitation upon him of Your Holy and Life-Giving Spirit, with all faith, love, power, and holiness. For not through the laying on of my hands, but through the sending of Your many mercies, is grace bestowed on worthy ones."[35]

The consciousness that Christ Himself is present and active in this sacrament unites the celebrant of the mystery, in a profound fear and responsibility, first with those who assist at the sacrament and also with the one who receives it. In this encounter of souls penetrated by the awareness of the presence and working of the same Christ, the transmission of the power of Christ from those who have already been in His service to the new servant is achieved.

The new deacon is then invested with the symbols of the capacity for diaconal service by the hierarch, who hands to him the *orarion* and the cuffs in front of the royal doors after he has shown them to the people and declared three times, "He is worthy!" To this the people respond each time with their own confirmation: "He is worthy!" Through their assent the faithful participate in this event of the consecration of a new servant of God and of the Church.

In the visible moments of the ordination of a priest, various differences are included, differences that emphasize what is distinct in the service of the priest. The candidate for the priesthood kneels down on both knees before the holy table, showing that he gives himself to Christ in a more pronounced manner. In the first prayer the bishop asks of Christ that He bestow the gift of "this great grace" of the priesthood, and in the second prayer the priest's ministries as celebrant of the mysteries and as preacher of the divine word are mentioned specifically: "That he may be worthy to stand blamelessly before Your altar, to proclaim the Gospel of Your Kingdom, to work with holiness at conveying the word of Your truth, to offer You gifts and spiritual sacrifices, and to renew Your people through the font of rebirth."[36]

Then facing the people, besides the vestments that symbolize his authority to be celebrant of the mysteries, the Book of the Liturgy (the *Liturgikon*) is also put into his hands; this book represents his principal service as celebrant of the Divine Liturgy. And after the transformation of the holy gifts, the bishop entrusts to him the sacred body of the Lord so that he may keep it in his right hand, with his left hand placed crosswise over it; at this point the bishop says these words: "Receive this Treasure and preserve it until the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you will be held accountable for it."[37] Then the priest withdraws to the east side of the holy table, holding the sacred body in his hands, which are placed over the body and in some fashion identified with it. The priest will keep the body of the Lord sacrificed for the sake of the faithful until the end of the world. In this sense he is the representative of all the priests of the Church, and he is also a single priest who must make this body available to the faithful until the end of his own life, which for him coincides with the end of the world. For just as he lived his life until the end, so he will rise up before the Lord at the resurrection, or present himself after his death.

The bishop's responsibility to give the priest the body of the Lord and the priest's responsibility to receive it come together and are integrated within a common responsibility before Christ. This responsibility is also before the people, to whom the bishop must make available the body of Christ—that is, Christ Himself—for the duration of his whole life, so that it may be passed down to other bishops and priests until the end of the world. The eschatological opening up of the priesthood and of the Eucharist is especially prominent here. The priest, holding in his hands the body of the Lord, looks toward the life eternal, when the mystical body will be required of him.

In this unity realized through the common resonance of this deepest responsibility before Christ and before the Church in both her present form and her eschatological future, and in every step of the way up until that point—a responsibility to the Church that ends only in eternity—Christ procures for Himself through the mediation of the bishop a new visible instrument of His own, of His activity, in the mysteries that the priest will celebrate. In this common responsibility, the one who ordains and the one ordained become completely transparent to the activity of Christ Himself, because it is Christ Himself who works through His Spirit. "If the Holy Spirit did not exist, there would be no pastors and teachers in the Church. For these are established through the Spirit, as St. Paul also says: 'among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers' [Acts 20:28]."[38] "For this is the meaning of χειροτονία (i.e., "putting forth the hand") or ordination: the hand of the man is laid upon (the person) but the whole work is of God, and it is His hand that touches the head of the one ordained, if he be duly ordained."[39]

At the ordination of a bishop, it is not only the hand of one of the bishops that is laid upon the head of the candidate but also the book of the Holy Gospels. On one hand this indicates the principal task that the new bishop accepts, and on the other hand it underlines the belief that it is Christ Himself who is making this man a complete instrument of His own. In the first prayer, reference is made to the "yoke of the Gospel" that the new hierarch is accepting; in the second prayer, after his obligation to "offer sacrifice and oblations on behalf of all the people" is recalled, he is given the name of "steward of the episcopal grace." Thus he is placed in a special relationship with Christ, the true Pastor, so that he too may lay down his life for the faithful just as Christ has done, perfecting them through His example, His teaching, and the whole of His activity. "Make him an imitator of You, the true Shepherd, laying down his life for his sheep; make him a guide for the blind, a light for those in darkness, an instructor of the unwise, a teacher of youth, a lamp to the world; so that when he has accomplished the work of perfecting the souls of those entrusted to him in this present life, he may stand without reproach before Your great judgment seat."[40]

After this, he receives vestments that are beyond those of the priesthood: the *sakkos*, the *omophorion*, and the miter. Keeping his priestly vestments and strengthening them further with the *sakkos*, the bishop will maintain in its complete form the sacerdotal ministry of celebrating the mysteries, never separating himself from the other spiritual and Eucharistic communities and from their believers, because he also possesses the rank of a priesthood with a wider unifying activity. By receiving the *omophorion* he assumes the pastoral responsibility for the whole community of the faithful in the likeness of Christ, who laid down His life for the salvation of each one among us, like the shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine sheep and goes in search of the one who is lost; this gives a spiritual significance to the bishop's royal power, symbolized by the miter. It is a spiritual power, a responsibility for the salvation of all the faithful.

As the instrument of Christ, the hierarch has a tremendous responsibility for the salvation of souls; he must imitate Christ in humility, as an example of purity, of disinterestedness, of kindness, of self-sacrifice. If he understands his role as representative of Christ as a basis for power in the worldly sense, he has separated himself interiorly from Christ, and through him the activity of Christ—who is kind, humble, pure, and in a state of continual self-sacrifice—is no longer accomplished in all its effectiveness. As an instrument of Christ, he must be a model servant of Christ and will have to give account at the judgment seat of Christ for the way he has fulfilled his ministry: if he has accomplished it well, he will have the greater reward; if he has accomplished it badly, he will receive the greater condemnation.

CHAPTER 7

MARRIAGE: THE MYSTERY OF HUMAN LOVE CROWNED IN GLORY AND HONOR

The mystery of marriage is a holy act, of divine origin, in which the Holy Spirit is imparted through the priest to a man and a woman who unite themselves to one another freely in marriage. This holy act sanctifies and elevates the natural bond of marriage to the dignity of representing the spiritual union between Christ and the Church.[1]

A. The Place of Marriage among the Other Mysteries

A first question that might arise in conjunction with this sacrament has to do with its place in the succession of the mysteries. This question implies a similar question about the place held by ordination. If the priest is the celebrant of all the mysteries, then why does not ordination come first or last in the list of the sacraments? Why does the tradition of the Church place ordination after baptism, chrismation, the Eucharist, and confession but before marriage and holy unction? A first response might be that through the four earlier mysteries, a human being is placed within a direct relationship with Christ and only indirectly is he placed in a relationship of service with other human beings, whereas through the mystery of marriage a human being is placed in a close relationship with his fellow human being, and through holy unction he receives help for his body. Hence this would justify placing ordination too after the first four mysteries, which place someone in direct relationship with Christ, inasmuch as his salvation depends upon those four mysteries, whereas the principal role of the priest is to help men, through Christ, to achieve their salvation.

This response could also take the following form: the four mysteries listed before ordination give man the grace with which he collaborates in achieving his salvation, but this grace bears its fruit fully through ordination and marriage. The majority of human beings live out the fullness of the relationship of marriage by actualizing the virtues as fruits of their collaboration with this grace, or as forms of their consecration within this uninterrupted and intense relationship. Now, once this relationship is entered into, it has a certain quality of prominence that determines in a positive sense all the other relationships that a human being has in society, which marriage multiplies. This occurs all the more with the priesthood. Hence the mystery of marriage and the mystery of priesthood help the faithful, through the grace given to them, to apply the graces of the remaining sacraments in an appropriate way within the concrete familial and social situation in which the vast majority of them live by nature, or within the ecclesial role assumed by the others.[2] These two sacraments help them—in their relationships with their fellow men, in marriage, in priesthood, and in the many problems and relations that these states give rise to—to encounter God or to develop their relationship with Christ especially through one fellow human being with whom they are united for life, or with the faithful for whom they are responsible. Marriage and priesthood as mysteries bring to light the fact that the person is not fulfilled except in communion, that person and communion are two inseparable polarities; they make evident the fact that the mysteries bear their fruit in the responsibility of human beings toward one another. From this point of view, the priesthood is a richer fruit than that of the other sacraments, and hence it is listed after them and before the other sacraments in which the former bear fruit.

Perhaps the fact that the monks, through a charism that overcomes nature, succeed through their effort in holding themselves apart from the relationship of marriage and the complex of necessary relationships and problems imposed by marriage, keeping themselves within a direct and in some fashion strictly personal relationship with Christ, explains why the Church does not consecrate the entry into the monastic state through a separate mystery but only through a sacramental.

Paul Evdokimov observes, "Through the grace of the sacrament [of marriage], failures are never mortal wounds, nor are imperfections condemned without recourse. What the monks attain *directly*, the spouses work out *indirectly*, and their *means* is the sacramental sphere of grace. The one through the other they look at Christ, and it is 'the Other,' His love, that is the gift of grace."[3]

The fact that we can see God through the other, that love toward the other makes him transparent to God for us, is a gift of the Incarnation of the Word. Through this the Word of God gave us the power to see Him through the human face, first in Himself, then in all those in whom Christ takes up His dwelling, or continues to be incarnate through the mysteries. Only because Christ as God is transparent in the other and beautifies the other does this other show himself to us as worthy of an unending love; the love for this other is never exhausted. Apart from Christ a permanent love for a concrete person would be impossible. "If one were to stand outside of the Incarnation, the infinite, qualitative, unbridgeable distance between man and God, His absolute otherness, it would make love unhappy and all communion, even communication, indirect and veiled. Projected into the relationships of the betrothed, the fundamental otherness of the other makes love especially unhappy and impossible."[4] The monk, though unmarried, stands nevertheless within a relationship with God as person, hence in a state of acute responsibility. That is why the patristic literature gives to monasticism the name of "the true philosophy."

The fact that in marriage God is known through the other, whereas in holy unction He is known through the comforting that those in a state of bodily sickness receive from Him, causes these two mysteries to be given their place after that of ordination, after the priest has placed man in direct relationship with Christ through the other four sacraments. But there are two facts that bind these two mysteries with the four previous ones: the fact that the mediated form in which Christ is known through these two final sacraments is nevertheless a direct knowledge of Him through the transparence of the other or of the weakened body, and hence it is not a simple *a priori* or *a posteriori* kind of knowledge of the fellow man or of the sick body; and the fact that, like sickness, marriage is a type of concrete situation in which the graces of the other sacraments are brought forth as fruit. But priesthood is linked even more with the four previous mysteries through which Christ is received as a personal Savior, as it is with these last two through the more responsible relationships with men in which the fruit borne from the grace received is made manifest.

B. Marriage as a Natural, Lifelong Bond between a Man and a Woman

Marriage as a natural, lifelong bond between a man and a woman is based on the fact that only together do man and woman form humanity in its completeness. "There is but one suffering: to be alone."[5] Not even God is a single person. For in that case, there would be no love, and indeed no person, and hence God would not be everywhere. Nor therefore would the human being exist as the image of God; he would be a monad confined within himself. In that case his existence, if he existed at all, would be torture. Genesis says that God made Eve because He saw that "it is not good that man should be alone" (Gen 2:18). God created Eve not only so that she might help Adam but also so that she could protect him from loneliness, for they constitute the complete human being only because they complete one another reciprocally. "He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind [Adam] in the day they were created" (Gen 5:2). Man is a complete unity, hence the image of God, because his unity as man is realized in this duality, which is personal. It is not uniform; rather, man and woman complement each other: "And indeed from the beginning, God appears to have made special provision for this union; and discoursing of the twain as one, He said thus, 'Male and female created He them' [Gen 1:27]," notes St. John Chrysostom.[6] St. Cyril of Alexandria says, "God created co-being."[7]

The taking of Eve from out of Adam means that Eve was contained in Adam potentially even before she was brought into her distinct existence. But she did not exist in Adam as something identical with him, and therefore she is not the result of a mere development of his own reality. Man has a double polarity in his very essence, and only in this way is he a dialogical being. Partners in a dialogue must have something in common but also something that is different, of a difference greater than that which exists between one individual member of the same sex and another. "We can state that these two aspects of man are at this point inseparable in the mind of God, and that a human being, taken in isolation and viewed by himself, is not fully human."[8] He is only half a being that is not identical with the other half.

The complementary bodily distinction reenforces and conditions a complementary spiritual difference. This does not make each human being less human, but each one experiences humanity in a different mode and within reciprocal complementarity. Each one is as much a human being as the other, but the two live the fullness of humanity only together, in reciprocal complementarity. In other words, this human unity that is at once differentiated and complementary is a conjugal unity. "It is from the beginning, *in principio*, that the human being has been a nuptial being."[9] The human couple in paradise was a conjugal couple. This was the "paradisiacal grace of marriage, *tes tou gamos charitos*," which had its foundation in the dual nature of man; but this couple also had a particular grace.[10]

In order for it to be a perfect union, marriage entails a perfect love. For this reason it must be indissoluble. Thus from the beginning marriage possessed the attributes of unity and indissolubility. The man possessed fully, within the perfect union with a woman, all that was essential to his own completeness, and likewise for the woman. Passing from the bond with one woman to a bond with another, or from the bond with one man to the bond with another, never provides anyone with this full complementarity through a perfect union. The feminine is always sought but never fully found within the giving of it fully and for all one's life long, and the same with the masculine. Each half remains to a greater or lesser degree an incomplete individual as a human being; each half remains in its loneliness to a greater or lesser degree.

Complete unity between a man and a woman, corresponding to a perfect love, is not a passing reality. For each has found in the other not an object whose possibilities for satisfaction are limited, and who is hidden as a person so long as he or she is treated as an object, but an inexhaustible person—a person who is eternally new in his or her capacity and imagination for self-giving.

These two love one another because they complete one another, because they are not uniform. "Love arises not between two souls who make the same sound but between souls that sound in harmony," to use Schiller's phrase.[11] Love is a change of being, a reciprocal activity for completeness. Love enriches each because it receives and gives without ceasing, while hatred impoverishes,[12] because it gives and receives nothing.

The man discovers in the woman a boundless mystery. She recognizes certain of her own insufficiencies, which seek their completion through the man, and so she loves the man; and the same is true for the man. Marriage is at one and the same time love and help, joy in the other, and patience with the other. For all of these reasons, the two who marry are given divine grace. Love unites awe before the mystery of the other person with patience to endure the other's limits and incapacities and with help for each person in dealing with these. In love, both become strong.

Marriage as a natural bond has been weakened and disfigured in many ways after the Fall, because of the selfishness that the Fall set loose and helped to develop. Thus it has lost the grace connected with the primordial state. Nevertheless, in its essence it was not completely destroyed, just as human nature itself was not completely destroyed by sin.

The man is thus made complete through woman because she is the other half of the species, and it is only together with her that the man forms the complete human being, and only in union with her that he is realized as man. And the same is true for woman; man completes woman, and vice versa. And if the man does not in fact complete the woman and is not completed by her, he does not achieve his realization as a man, nor does the woman achieve hers as a woman. In this way, in his wife the husband possesses the entire other half of the species, and vice versa, so that neither one has need of another man or another woman.

But every man or woman is not simply a uniform example of one half of the species; he or she also bears the unique characteristics of an unrepeatable person. By living together, the two persons conform themselves to one another under their mutual influence, because the man is also completed as person through the woman, and vice versa. Each becomes a kind of co-person, and both form a co-personal unity. Hence the man who passes from one woman to another no longer realizes himself as person, defined through sharing one life with a woman. His personal traits will become fluid, undefined. Strictly speaking, he will become rather an individual-species, for whoever lacks an authentic and permanent personal communion is more a faceless example of the species than a person. In him the passions of the species develop to a great degree; they are not harmonized and not curbed so as to become the traits of a person with spiritual qualities, traits that stand out in a personal way. Through education, a couple's children too acquire the parents' combined personal characters, or indeed the two parents in time can come under the influence of the personal traits of their children. In this way human beings are prepared to become a universal co-personal community within the Kingdom of Heaven. This reciprocal and personal conforming of the one to the other did not become totally absent even after the Fall, and has even received a certain support from the natural law. "The Orthodox Ritual specifies: 'Neither original sin nor the flood has in the least damaged the sacredness of marriage.' St. Ephrem the Syrian adds, 'From Adam until Christ, authentic love was the perfect sacrament.' . . . St. Augustine teaches the same: 'At Cana, Christ confirms what He instituted in Paradise.'"[13]

Nevertheless, the natural attributes of marriage, unity and indissolubility, were ignored by many people, and even by many entire nations. Yet the consciousness that marriage is one and indissoluble persists among human beings. It is this consciousness from which the question that the Pharisees put to Jesus stems: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" (Matt 19:3).

C. The Strengthening and Ennobling of Marriage by Christ

Christ strengthens anew the bond of marriage between man and woman and raises it up from the order of nature to the order of grace, and through His participation in the wedding at Cana, He enshrouds marriage in that atmosphere of grace that pours forth from His Person. By performing this first miracle at Cana through His supernatural power and by giving the newly married couple to drink the wine of exhilarating love that He offers through His grace, Jesus wishes to show that, beginning from the strengthening and ennobling of marriage, He has begun to raise up human life into the order of grace.

Later He affirms directly that marriage must be returned to that unity and indissolubility that it had at the beginning. To the Pharisees' question as to why Moses permitted a man to forsake his wife, Christ responds, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery" (Matt 19:8–9).

Jesus considers that the man who leaves his wife and takes another, or the man who marries the abandoned woman, is an adulterer, because He believes that the bond of marriage has not been abolished between the man who has left his wife by the simple fact that he has left her. Earlier He had said this directly when He replied to the question as to whether it was permitted for someone to divorce his wife for any reason at all, except for that of adultery (Matt 5:32). In the latter response, He affirms the unity of the married couple based on the fact that God made man male and female, and therefore whoever unites himself to his wife completes his own reality so totally with her that they form a single unity. The man has become a whole human being through this woman, and vice versa. God Himself has united them through the fact that He made them male and female, and hence through the fact that each becomes wholly human in union with the other, and this unity that each has found cannot be disintegrated and then refashioned with another partner. Because they no longer respect one another as persons but treat one another as temporary objects of pleasure, such persons fall from that human dignity that they received at creation: "And He answered and said to them, 'Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate'" (Matt 19:4–6).

Based on the word of the Savior, the Orthodox Church does not divorce those who are married except in the case where one of them has broken the unity between them by adultery. Still, the Church does not marry anyone more than three times. For a second marriage she imposes a penance and exclusion from Holy Communion for a period of two years; and for a third marriage, for a period of five years. In the prayers provided for a marriage of this kind, the forgiveness of the sins of those being married is asked: "O Master, Lord our God . . . forgive the wrongdoings of Your servants, calling them to repentance and giving them the forgiveness of their mistakes and the cleansing of their sins committed with or without their will, You who know the weakness of human nature."[14] However, in the case of the death of one of the two spouses, the other is admitted to a second marriage without any ecclesiastical process of divorce, because the marriage is considered to no longer exist (Rom 7:2).

But this indissoluble unity, established between a man and a woman, exists as a unity on the human plane, and so is not an organic, physiological unity but a unity through love. It is based on the love between two existing human beings who complement one another not only on the plane of the body but also of the spirit. For this they receive a particular grace in the Church. As such, this grace is not to be received passively but should be developed actively by the couple. Thus the indissolubility that is implied in nature and refashioned through grace is also a work of the will of the two persons.

If the two conceive of marriage only as a means of satisfying the desires of the flesh, the two will rapidly grow bored with one another. Marriage begins with a love that synthesizes bodily and spiritual attraction, with a love in which each partner values the mystery of the other and affirms in his or her love a limitless readiness to respect the other as person and to accept any sacrifice and weariness for the sake of the other.

But the synthesis of this total initial love is a bond that becomes real through deeds and in which the spiritual aspect assumes a more and more important place. Each of the two inscribes in his or her own being a greater and greater number of signs of attention, understanding, service, and sacrifice on the part of the other, and these bind the two persons more tightly together and cause them to know and appreciate one another more and more. This vital spiritual memory, which elevates each of the two as person, raising up the one through the other, causes their acts of bodily love to be penetrated with an ever-greater spirituality and familiarity.

The body of each becomes for the other a transparence of his or her spirituality; it acquires an ever-greater spiritual depth and clearly becomes his or her place. Each becomes a mystery for the other, all the more known but at the same time all the more indefinable. But this mystery that belongs to each one can be seen fully only by the other and is realized only through the other and for the sake of the other. The mystery of each of the two combines with that of the other within a unique mystery, for each one bears more and more of the other in his or her own person. Thus marriage is a genuine living mystery of duality, or a dual unity that begins to make itself felt and to become real from the moment of the union of the two in their wedding and indeed even before that time, and its potentialities are actualized throughout the whole course of their lives without the one growing tired of the other.

In this gradual pneumatization of the couple's bond, an important role is played by the exercise and growth of the responsibility that the one bears for the other. Love grows through the exercise of this reciprocal responsibility, and the responsibility grows through love. The love between beings who are subject to the conditions of so many of life's bodily needs is not just a happy contemplation of the other's bodily beauty, and then an increasingly experienced contemplation of the other's spiritual beauty too (although it certainly is this), but it is the motivation behind ceaseless acts of responsibility for the good of the other. And this imprints itself upon the acts of bodily love as a very important factor in the process of pneumatization.

This responsibility shows itself in deeds performed in the midst of society, for the family cannot properly be cared for without the fulfillment of certain obligations in society. The grace given to those who are married thus has effects in both society and the Church.

> As long as we visualize marriage as the concern of those alone who are being married, as something that happens to them and not to the whole Church, and, therefore, to the world itself, we shall never understand the truly sacramental meaning of marriage: the great mystery to which St. Paul refers when he says, "But I speak concerning Christ and the Church." . . . In this sense the sacrament of matrimony is wider than family. It is the sacrament of divine love, as the all-embracing mystery of being itself, and it is for this reason that it concerns the whole Church, and—through the Church—the whole world.[15]

A healthy family is a healthy cell in the structure of the Church and of society.

It is in the exercise of this responsibility that the human being acquires the fullness of his seriousness and solemnity. He becomes truly man, that is, a "man for others." This responsibility makes him truly a person, a factor of great and conscious effectiveness in the life of the other and of society, but this responsibility is sustained also by the respect for the other as person. Through a reciprocally sacrificial attitude, each of the two accentuates both his or her own character and that of the other; their union is accentuated all the more as a personal communion in which each person grows spiritually according to the degree of the union between them. Without experiencing and exercising this responsibility, man remains in a state akin to inconsistency, differing from a child only insofar as he lacks the child's innocence.

Within this responsibility the personal presence of God becomes ever more transparent for each through the other as an element that gives immeasurable value to the spouse. In the degree that the other discovers his or her own depth, he or she becomes more transparent to Christ, who guarantees both persons' eternal value as human beings, because He Himself became a human being. And this in turn causes the responsibility of each to grow toward the other. Therefore each one is placed by the other within a direct relationship with Christ, without any diminishment in either's own worth and consistency. Each experiences Christ in a specific way through the other, as a unique transparent medium. Both experience Christ as the one who appears through the other as through a transparent and unique medium of His complete revelation and as the one who imposes special responsibilities toward the other. Both experience Christ as Him who gave the one to the other and as the special medium through which communion and the persons themselves are revealed and developed through their mutual service. In this way each reveals himself or herself to the other in the deepest and most mysterious and most alluring dimension of his or her humanity. Neither one of them could experience Christ in such a profound way or within such a pronounced responsibility, nor could another man or woman reveal himself or herself so entirely in his or her own mystery and in the mystery of an ongoing and intensified personal communion, if either were to separate himself or herself from the spouse or if he or she were to form some ephemeral union with another man or woman. In that case each such union would be something more carnal, incapable of advancing ceaselessly into that reciprocal union and knowledge of the couple's profound spirituality in Christ.

This is the way in which the mystery of indissoluble love between a man and a woman—as a union that, in ever-deeper communion, is rendered spiritual—is a mystery in Christ. Their union in Christ is a small church, as St. John Chrysostom explains, or a part of the Church, for the Church too is made up of these kinds of units married in the Holy Spirit, who breathes into the Church. "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph 5:32), says the Holy Apostle Paul. Marriage "is a mystery and a type of a mighty thing . . . It is a type of the Church," says St. John Chrysostom.[16]

According to Clement of Alexandria, "But who are the two or three gathered in the name of Christ in the midst of whom the Lord is? Does He not by the two mean husband and wife?"[17] And St. John Chrysostom says, "When husband and wife are united in marriage, they are no longer seen as something earthly but as the image of God Himself."[18] And Theophilus of Antioch declares, "God made the woman together with the man, not only that thus the mystery of God's sole government might be exhibited, but also that this mutual affection might be greater."[19]

The wife is the human being who is closest to her husband, and vice versa, and they are thus because they complement and complete one another. In his wife the husband possesses humanity in the highest possible degree of intimacy that can be reached with him, and the same is true of the wife with her husband. They are revealed completely the one to the other within a state of total sincerity; each is to the other as another "I," while remaining nevertheless a "thou" who is necessary to the spouse if he or she is to reveal himself or herself. Each forgets the self, making himself or herself the "I" of the other. St. John Chrysostom says, "For the other party thereafter is yourself, when you love: since this is friendship, that the lover and the beloved should no longer be two persons divided, but in a manner one single person."[20] And he adds in another place, "He who has a friend, has another self."[21]

Thus each of the two spouses brings into reality the state for which he or she is yearning and realizes himself or herself as person in reciprocal communion. But this realization only comes about when their bodily love is penetrated by and submerged in a spiritual love.

When the wife has achieved for her husband the kind of intimate and chaste humanity that comes from the immersion of bodily love in spiritual love, then he is capable of looking upon any woman with pure eyes, and the wife upon any man. Marriage is thus a path toward the spiritualization of the two spouses not only in the relationship of the one vis-à-vis the other but also in all their relationships with all other human persons. All wives accept a spiritual depth for the sake of their husbands, who have come to this point in the persons of their wives, and all husbands for the sake of their wives, in the persons of their husbands. Then each knows all in their spiritual dimension. But the husband remains united with his wife in order to familiarize himself with her uniqueness, in order to achieve his own realization as person, and in order to know Christ through the medium of this uniqueness; and the woman in the same way. Here the social importance of marriage shows itself again.

But it must be made clear that even though it knows this great importance of marriage, Christianity remains nevertheless realistic. It does not look down upon the need for bodily union between man and woman. The prayers of the wedding service do not at all avoid speaking of this, but the service takes the view that it is only in marriage that bodily union becomes a means for complete spiritual union, or deepens this union more and more. Hence even while approving of marriage so that the need for bodily union between man and woman may be satisfied, at the same time it considers this union as a means of promoting their spiritual union.

Hence Christianity recognizes only two correct attitudes toward the desire of the flesh: either total abstinence from it outside the context of marriage, or the satisfaction of this desire as a means of spiritual union and of making progress in spiritual union. This is what is meant by the undefiled bed and the conjugal chastity to which the prayers of crowning make allusion. The Church attributes chastity to marriage also and considers it a path that leads to a deeper and deeper chastity; like monastic chastity, it too is a freedom of the spirit. Both also require a spiritual struggle. If it is satisfied outside the context of marriage, the desire of the flesh robs the man in such a way that he no longer sees in the woman anything beyond an instrument of satisfaction, and the same is true on the part of the woman. This same deformation can also occur in marriage, but only when the couple make no effort to transfigure and spiritualize their bodily union through the union of their souls. The deformation is almost inevitable when the grace of faith is missing, for in that case the desire of the flesh experienced by the man or the woman quickly grows bored and looks for satisfaction elsewhere.

Based on a realistic understanding of the inability of the majority of people to bring the desires of the flesh completely under control, and on the understanding of marriage as a unique means of transfiguring this desire, of transforming it through the penetrating influence that the spiritual union of man and woman has on their union in the flesh, the Church in consequence bestows a very great honor upon the mystery of marriage.

It is true that St. Paul says, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband . . . But if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion" (1 Cor 7:1–2, 9). However, this passage does not show that St. Paul understood marriage only in a negative way, as a remedy for the disordered manifestation of concupiscence, as a means tolerated for the purpose of satisfying sinful impulses without the social disorder that comes in the wake of satisfying them outside of marriage. Paul has shown elsewhere the eminently positive content of the marital union between man and woman (see Eph 5:28–32).

Others have gone beyond a justification of marriage as a remedy for concupiscence and have taken the view that it justifies its existence only through the procreation of children. But this view clearly includes an implicit understanding of marriage as a union that is more than merely physical. Among its more prominent representatives, mention must be made of the Blessed Augustine. Taking up a position opposed to this interpretation, Paul Evdokimov sees the marriage bond as something sublime in itself, needing no justification by the birth of children. He rightly disapproves of the doubts cast on the irreproachable moral quality of union in the flesh.[22]

In fact, St. Paul does not accept the satisfaction of the desires of the flesh outside of marriage and hence considers this extramarital satisfaction a sin. But why is it sinful outside of marriage? Clearly it is not only because of the social disorder that it provokes but also because it cannot be transfigured into a union of souls that is produced by the spiritual love proper to marriage. Who is not aware in fact that the man who desires a woman outside of marriage is reducing her to a carnal object of sensual pleasure? Only in marriage is she revealed as a person who needs to overcome her isolation and who bears a whole complex of her own problems in which she needs the help of another, just as a man does. Only marriage raises the relationship between man and woman to the level of friendship and deepens the level of their practical and reciprocal responsibility, in which each one must make a total commitment.

Thus marriage is not a simple remedy that is tolerated so that a desire that remains sinful by nature may be satisfied. Instead, it is a means that causes the bond between man and woman to truly become a complete bonding, a bonding that leads toward a total personal communion in which each person achieves a complete personal or truly human realization and helps the other to the same end, just as God willed when He created man and woman with a view to their reciprocal complementarity. In this sense the Church conceives of the connection of the spouses as a complete bonding, in body and soul. Where marriage is authentic, the spouses progress in this union of their souls, because it is only within this spiritual union that such progress is in fact possible for them. They must contribute to it, however, through their own wills, and the grace of the sacrament is given to them for this purpose. They need to be aware that if their bond diminishes to the level of the satisfaction of bodily desire, this bond itself will slide into sin and be prone to fall apart.

Although Christianity does not contest the importance of bodily union, neither does it justify it in isolation from everything else. When St. Paul declares that marriage is a remedy against a burning that is hard to bear or a remedy against its disordered satisfaction, he includes alongside this dimension of the meaning of marriage that of its being a means for the transfiguring of bodily union. This sense is even more evident in the words of St. John Chrysostom, in which he also attributes to marriage the meaning of procreation:

> There are two reasons for which marriage was instituted . . . to bring man to be content with one woman and to have children, but it is the first reason that is the most important. As for procreation, it is not required absolutely by marriage . . . The proof of this lies in the numerous marriages that cannot have children. This is why the first reason of marriage is to order sexual life, especially now that the human race has filled the entire earth.[23]

Other sections in Chrysostom's writings, where he presents marriage as an image of unity, show that he also attributes to marriage the sense of the realization of a spiritual union.

It is also true, however, that an important means that helps the two spouses to make progress toward an ever more profound spiritual union is the birth and rearing of children. When the couple takes on this responsibility, their acts of bodily union are imbued with an even more pronounced spiritual element. In this way, in the first phase of the marriage the taking on of this responsibility for the birth of children assumes a great role in the transfiguration of their union in the flesh (a transfiguration that plays a greater part in the spouses' union), so that in the second phase of the marriage this bodily union may be transcended to a great degree in its nature by the spiritual union in which the spouses have advanced. It is true that in the text of St. John Chrysostom cited above, he declares that a marriage is accomplished even when only its principal purpose—the regulating of sexuality—is achieved without the fulfillment of its second purpose, the procreation of children. He adds, however, that the marriage is realized without the birth of children when this occurs not through the will of the spouses but apart from their will. For when the birth of children is intentionally avoided, the bond between spouses declines into a simple occasion of satisfying the desire of the flesh and thus shifts toward acts that are sinful.

The children who are born and raised within a marriage do not have their place outside the bond that binds the spouses together; rather, they cause the communion between the spouses to grow in an essential way through the common responsibility for the children, a responsibility in which the two are united. Hence children make the essence of the marriage more profound, for without children marriage is impoverished of its interior spiritual substance. The spouses in the majority of these cases become a kind of selfish unit *a deux*, and their selfishness can be even deeper than that of a single individual, because one spouse has in the other virtually all that he or she needs to be satisfied in the material and bodily sphere, and they do not even suffer from the state of being alone as much as does the one who is locked up within the prison of a single self.

Through their children the spouses transcend this selfishness and open themselves up toward others. Through their children they open up more toward society in general, which they need in order to raise the children and in order to incorporate them into the framework of society. Through the children, the parents enter into richer relationships with society. Pavel Florensky has observed that society—and hence the Church too—is formed of dyads, not of individuals; we might paraphrase this by saying "of molecules rather than atoms."[24] But a family that has no children is not vital, in the full sense of this term, to society. It is the family, not individuals, that promotes social and ecclesial cohesion. The cell of the family, although it is not dissolved within the ecclesial or social organism, must be in communication with the other cells through their common "blood," that is, their children.

It is clear that the birth and rearing of children, the service of Church and society, as a curbing of the selfishness of the two (or of more, including the children), implies a cross. This is why at the ceremony of crowning in the marriage Liturgy, a hymn dedicated to the martyrs is sung. The spouses who do not curb the temptation toward this selfishness *a deux* will become in the end completely opaque even to themselves. They will constitute together an instinctual selfishness of the kind characteristic of a small group of animals, a group insensitive to the others even within the same biological family, a group enclosed like a city within its own walls and capable of going outside the walls only to plunder and acquire, never to give.

> A marriage which does not constantly crucify its own selfishness and self-sufficiency, which does not "die to itself" that it may point beyond itself, is not a Christian marriage. The real sin of marriage today is not adultery or lack of "adjustment" or "mental cruelty." It is the idolization of the family itself, the refusal to understand marriage as directed toward the Kingdom of God. This is expressed in the sentiment that one would "do anything" for his family, even steal. The family has here ceased to be for the glory of God; it has ceased to be a sacramental entrance into His presence. It is not the lack of respect for the family, it is the idolization of the family that breaks the modern family so easily, making divorce its almost natural shadow. It is the identification of marriage with happiness and the refusal to accept the cross in it. In a Christian marriage, in fact, three are married; and the united loyalty of the two toward the third, who is God, keeps the two in an active unity with each other as well as with God.[25]

Properly speaking, Christ is the one who celebrates the mystery of marriage, but He celebrates it by uniting the two in Himself, and as such He remains permanently as the means of union between them.

If they separate themselves from Him, the unity between them is also weakened.

The curbing of this egoism *a deux* includes also the curbing of the use of the conjugal bond merely for the sake of pleasure alone with the intention of avoiding the conception and birth of children.

D. The Mystery's Constitutive Aspects and Their Significance for the Spiritual Power Bestowed by the Mystery

The more explicit enunciation of all the purposes of Christian marriage, raised up by grace, occurs within the liturgical order of the mystery, and through this mystery the grace of God is imparted to those who are being married in order to help them make these purposes a reality.

The celebrant of the mystery in the Orthodox Church is the priest, because through him Jesus Christ Himself comes invisibly before and into the midst of those who are being married. It is Christ who places His seal upon the natural bond that the two bring into being through their mutual consent, and it is Christ who sustains their union in Himself. A further reason is that it is through the priest that the marriage of the two is inserted as a living cell within the Church, filled with the grace of Christ that flows from the Church. To think that the marriage is contracted only through the consent of the spouses (as is the case in Catholicism, where the priest is only a witness) is to understand marriage only at the level of a natural bond. However, already at the beginning of the second century, St. Ignatius of Antioch said, "But it becomes both men and women who marry, to form their union with the approval of the bishop."[26]

The recipients of the sacrament are two faithful members of the Church, of opposite sex, single, neither of whom has been married in the Church more than twice previously and who are not found within the fifth degree of consanguinity. Mixed marriages between Orthodox Christians and those of other Christian confessions are permitted on condition that the children will be raised in the Orthodox faith and the mystery will be celebrated in the Orthodox Church.[27] Marriage is not permitted for deacons and priests after they have received ordination, and no one is admitted to ordination as bishop if he has been married before, except in the case of the death of the spouse or her entry into the monastic life.

As far as *the liturgical order of the celebration of the mystery* is concerned, it is introduced by the rite of betrothal, that is, the promise exchanged between the future spouses that they will be united in marriage, a promise that is also blessed by the priest. This betrothal used to take place (and occasionally even today can take place) some time before the celebration of the marriage itself, as a way in which the young people can prepare themselves for the wedding and as a way of making a mutual engagement before they are ready to marry. Inasmuch, however, as the Church considers that those who have gone through the rite of betrothal are obligated to one another in the same way as through marriage itself, today in the great majority of cases the betrothal rite occurs immediately before the wedding.

The betrothal is celebrated through an exchange of rings between the future spouses after the priest, with the rings, has made the sign of the cross over the couple; the priest then says to the man, "The servant of God *(N.)* is betrothed to the handmaid of God *(N.)* in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."[28] He does the same in the case of the woman, also using her name as a way of showing the personal equality of the two and the freedom of each in accomplishing this act. To each of the betrothed, however, the priest recalls the name of the other, and with each ring he makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of each to show that through the rings they are united, the one with the other, for the whole of their lives in the name of the Holy Trinity, and that they are to also keep in mind the meaning of the spiritual power that the cross possesses to strengthen their unity.

Already from the beginning of the rite of betrothal, each member of the couple, the man and woman (or their godparents on their behalf), holds a lighted candle, showing that they will walk in the light of Christ and of His will, thus making their marriage one filled with a higher meaning.

Whereas the priest began the betrothal rite with the exclamation "Blessed is our God," as in the rite of any sacramental, he begins the wedding service with the words "Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," as in any of the mysteries through which grace is bestowed. For it is from this point onward that the obligations of a life lived together begin, obligations that stand in need of the assistance of grace; and it is from this point onward that the couple, destined to grow as a union of love and of fruitfulness in their children, takes its place within the framework of the Kingdom of God and in the Church. In the first prayer the priest asks Christ to be present Himself as He was at the wedding in Cana and to grant to those being married "a peaceful life, length of days, discretion, mutual love in the bond of peace, healthy issue, the joy of grateful offspring, and that crown of glory that never fades . . . Give them both of the dew from heaven and of the earth's bounty . . . so that in turn they may share with those who are in want."[29] Thus the prayer is for all those positive things that their union as a couple will need, and most especially for mutual love and for protection against the temptation to infidelity, the thought of which might steal into the mind of the one or the other; yet the duty of generosity to those in need is not forgotten either, for marriage is not a monad selfishly taken up with its own interests alone.

In the second prayer, after recalling that God created man as "king of creation" and, thinking that it was not good that he remain alone, gave him woman to be one indivisible body with her, the priest asks especially from God for the two being married the grace of being protected from all manner of dangers. In this regard he prays God to give the couple the same joy that the Empress Helen experienced when she found the cross and to remember them as God remembered the Forty Martyrs when He sent them crowns from heaven. Thus allusion is made to the difficulties that can arise in the family and the cross that these difficulties represent, a cross that the spouses will need to bear with patience in order to lay hold of the heavenly crown. The prayer also displays, therefore, the understanding that the marriage service has of the crowns with which the couple will soon be crowned: they represent the necessity of an effort full of firm resolve in the life of the family. Again the priest prays to God on their behalf for "fair children," "harmony of soul and body,"[30] and growth into every good thing. A happy marriage implies the harmony of souls and bodies, and both of these depend upon the couple being "of one mind."

In the third prayer the priest asks, "Now, too, Master, reach out Your hand from Your holy dwelling place and conjoin these Your servants *(N.)* and *(N.)* for by You is the woman married to the man. Unite them in one mind. Wed them into one body. Grant them fruitful issue, the delight of fair children."[31] Their bodily union springs from their oneness of mind within an agreement of their hearts that moves them together toward this unity. It is this "symphony" to which Pavel Florensky alluded above in which each of the two is preserved in his or her personal reality because each one thinks and wills and feels, but this thinking and willing and feeling happens in accord with the other, for the sake of the other, and in convergence with the other. No thought that goes against the other has a place within their bond, and hence their union is like a crown of glory and honor. Nevertheless, this is only because they accept the possibility of the procreation of children; through this assumption of a common responsibility, they grow in the process of their own pneumatization.

In this way the bodily union between man and woman, instead of being an act of sinful concupiscence as it is outside of marriage, becomes an act willed and blessed by God.

After the third prayer the priest places the crown on the head of the groom, after he has touched the forehead of each of the two with it and has made the sign of the cross over the man with it, and says, "The servant of God *(N.)* is crowned in marriage to the handmaid of God *(N.)* in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."[32] He then places the crown on the head of the bride in the same way. This is the central act of the mystery, the act through which the sacrament is in fact accomplished.

By touching the forehead of each of the two separately with each crown and by making mention of both of them when each is crowned, the marriage service shows that the crown of each one is also in a certain way the crown of the other. Each one bears his or her own crown inasmuch as each one is united with the other and inasmuch as the crown of each is united with the crown of the other: in the love between the two, the crown and the glory of each are found.

The crown is the sign of glory and honor, as the priest says immediately after the crowning: "O Lord our God, crown them with glory and honor."[33] The glory is linked to the honor, and vice versa, and their glory is visible to God and man. It consists in the fidelity and love between the two spouses, in the sacrifices each makes for the good of the other, in the exercise of responsibility that one assumes on behalf of the other, and in the making of all the efforts demanded by the good of their family life. It is in the fulfillment of all these that their happiness as a couple is realized, insofar as this happiness can be realized on this earth. From the harmony of such a couple, the whole of creation draws benefit as it moves along the path toward the harmonization willed for it by God.

The wedding crown is at the same time a diadem, a sign of honor and dignity. The crown is worn by the king, and both Christ and the high priest are kings. It is a sign of a certain seriousness, maturity, and responsibility entrusted to a particular person for the protection, safeguarding, and guidance of others. By the act of their crowning, it is apparent that the two have emerged from the care of their parents and have received responsibility for their own lives; a mutual responsibility for one another; and a common responsibility for their own family and their own future children, their very own fortress. Human beings are not truly whole until they have come to the point at which they are capable of receiving this responsibility for themselves and for others. But human beings were brought into existence by God to be "sovereigns over creation," and they realize this dignity—which is a dignity of responsibility—in a special and concrete way when they take upon themselves the responsibilities bound up with family life, because their further responsibilities for the life of society and of the world in general are implicit in these.

"St. John Chrysostom sees in the crown the symbol of a nuptial asceticism, in order to obtain chastity, integrity of being."[34] Crowns are in fact given to the martyrs for their perseverance in the faith. The spouses too have to persevere through the assault of many temptations met with in their conjugal life; they have to suffer patiently through many difficulties in order to win the crown of love in its fullness. The glory that comes with the crown also comes with the bearing of a certain ascesis, a curbing and enduring, and with the resolute and trying fulfillment of various responsibilities. This is why the sign of the cross is made with the crowns over the faces of those upon whose heads they are placed.

After the readings from the Epistle and from the Gospel, the priest once again says a prayer in which he asks that God may "keep their marriage honorable" and "their household above reproach,"[35] clearly with reference to a blind and irresponsible licentiousness and to any thought of infidelity, both of which can cause the couple to fall away from their reciprocal respect for one another as persons and from their personal communion with one another. The deeper and the more complete love is, the more chaste it is at the same time. Hence the priest goes on to pray God for His help that "their life together be blameless."[36] Only in this way is their love complete. The undefiled bed, like the spotless or chaste sexual union, consists in the pneumatizing of the spouses and of their sexual relations through all of their love, respect, and responsibility to bear with one another, to help each other reciprocally, and to make progress in all these areas. In this way they gain the respect of other human beings and glory from God.

Then the couple drinks from a common cup as a sign that their lives will grow sweeter from this shared sweetness of their love and joy. Next the priest leads them, with their hands joined together, three times in a circle around the *analogion* as a symbol of the unbreakable character of their love and relationship. "The pathway of the nuptial life is no longer a simple itinerary; it is placed on the road to eternity, and the shared advance of the couple is therefore like the still point of a turning wheel,"[37] of the stable movement of their souls in God. Nothing will break apart their love and fidelity; nothing will intrude into their love; nothing will deflect it from its steadfastness.

During the time taken by this circular procession, a hymn is sung, the hymn of the joy of the Prophet Isaiah at the conception of the Son of God in the womb of the Virgin. Now the foundation has been put in place for the building up of the new human beings, images of the incarnate Christ. Those who will be born from this new marriage will themselves also be members of the eternal Kingdom of God. Heaven itself rejoices because of this new extension of the Kingdom of God, and during the time of the circling of the *analogion*, the holy martyrs are asked once again that through their prayers the souls of those being crowned may be saved by a patient endurance that imitates that of the martyrs themselves. The joy that comes from the birth of children, the joy of the love shared by the spouses, does not lack the element of abstinence, of suffering sorrows, and of struggle. These are the same hymns that are sung at baptism and at ordination and for the same reasons: to celebrate the birth of new members of the Kingdom of God and to rejoice in their future growth, even though this will not come about without the efforts of abstinence, of patient endurance, and of many struggles.

As he takes the crowns off the heads of the crowned spouses, the priest speaks once again of their glory, for they will wear their crowns invisibly for their whole lives, so long as they live in genuine love, in chaste fidelity, and in mutual responsibility and respect. With these crowns they will journey all the way to the Kingdom of Heaven: "O God our God . . . receive . . . their crowns into Your kingdom, preserving them spotless, blameless and without reproach forever."[38]

In the final benediction of the marriage service, a commemoration is made of the Emperors Constantine and Helen and of the Martyr Procopius. They who have been crowned are raised up, like the Emperors Constantine and Helen, to the honors of royalty and to the work of collaborating in the defense of the faith; and, like the martyrs, to the patient endurance of sufferings and difficulties. The enjoyment of the good things of life and their exaltation to the heights of a chaste and perfect love are linked to the struggle for these same benefits and to the burdens of self-denial and patient endurance. These difficulties are mixed together with the sweetness of union in body and soul and play a role in the spiritualization of this union.

Christianity is realistic. It makes no exaggerated promises of unclouded happiness, free of all burdens and difficulties, for life is made up of both of these dimensions. Happiness will win out in the end, but whoever expects from marriage only happiness, only pleasures, will not be able to stand it for long.

By way of summary, we can say that prayer is offered on behalf of those who marry so that they may receive the grace of God for many purposes: the grace to be able to control the tendency to exclusively seek the satisfaction of the desires of the flesh, for this degrades each member of the couple to the status of an object of the other's selfish passion; the grace to be able to curb any other type of selfishness or infidelity of one spouse in his or her relations with the other; the grace to strengthen the patient endurance of each when confronted with the limitations of the other; the grace to strengthen the will of each spouse to be of help to the other so that their love in Christ may grow deeper, something that is not possible unless the selfishness of each is brought under control; and finally, the grace of having children, which in itself is identical with the curbing of every kind of selfishness and with the progress of the couple toward the fullness of communion. All these graces give many gifts: chastity to their conjugal relations; honor and nobility to each of the spouses; real openness of each toward the other, and toward God and their neighbors. Through these graces they gain salvation for themselves. And these are the graces that they pledge to one another and for which they pray—together with their relatives and friends, as well as the priest—at the time of their wedding service.

A slightly different and simpler formulation by way of conclusion might be this: the grace of this mystery is bestowed so as to make possible and to promote between the married persons a love that is total and therefore pure, a mutual help and persevering endurance, and a patience to bear and to overcome all their difficulties. The life of a couple is something complex. In part it is made up of the joy that comes from mutual love and self-giving, which bear in themselves a certain dimension of the infinite, but in part it is also made up of the burdens and weaknesses that, paradoxically, are connected to the mysterious and indefinable reality of human beings.

CHAPTER 8

HOLY UNCTION: THE MYSTERY OF DIVINE HEALING

A. Definition and Main Purpose

In the mystery of holy unction, the faithful Christian who is sick receives invisibly, through the anointing with consecrated oil and the accompanying prayers of the priests, the grace of healing or of the easing of his bodily pains, the grace of spiritual strengthening, and the forgiveness of those sins he has committed since his last confession. The practice of this sacrament in the time of the apostles, and hence its origin from Christ Himself through the apostles, is attested in the Epistle of James: "Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (Jas 5:14–15).

One of the principal causes for human depression and discouragement is sickness, and very frequently neither sickness nor depression can be overcome by using human means alone. The believer who is sick is tormented also by his awareness that his sickness may have an additional cause in certain sins that he has not been able to confess, or that he may even eventually die without having these sins forgiven. Is there anyone who at some point in his life has not passed through sickness and through these depressions and anxieties that increase his suffering? They make up part of the reality of our human existence.

Can we possibly believe that God has given no thought to some help that might be given to human beings in these situations of illness and spiritual weakness? The mystery of holy unction shows that God, faced with those who are suffering and who put their hope in Him and call out to Him when sickness touches them, shows them His mercy. Hence in all the prayers of this mystery, appeal is made especially to the mercy of God, and God appears in this sacrament as the "Physician" at His work and filled with compassion. In the antiphon of the canticle of Arsenius, from the service of the consecration of the oil with which the sick person is anointed—an antiphon that is repeated after each troparion—this prayer is made: "Lord Christ, have mercy on Your servants." Likewise, in the intonation for the fourth tone, the text reads, "Physician and help of those in pain . . . grant healing to Your afflicted servants; pity and show mercy to those who have erred grievously and absolve them, Christ, of their failings."[1]

Sometimes the grace of God works more or less directly on the body of the sick person and brings about his healing, although even in such a case the strengthening of soul and the forgiveness of the person's sins also take place. At other times the healing is produced more through the strengthening of the powers of the soul or again through the forgiveness of sins that have not been confessed, although this necessarily strengthens the soul too, and through it the body. Nevertheless, what is principally given through the grace of this mystery is the healing of the body. It is only when it has been established that the sick person is in fact dying that bodily healing is no longer the principal effect or purpose of the sacrament but only the others.

This mystery can be considered as the mystery of the body *par excellence*, or the mystery established for the purpose of bringing health back to the body. Through it the positive value attributed by God to the human body is strongly emphasized, for God Himself assumed a body and keeps it for all eternity, saving us by means of it and through it imparting to us the very life of God.

In the prayer that is recited after the second readings from the Epistle and the Gospel, Christ is asked to grant the sick person return to health based on the fact that He assumed human form and "became created for the sake of the creature,"[2] demonstrating His will to save the body and to raise it up to the Kingdom of God, to make of the body a means of an eternal communion between God and the human race.

Hence in the same prayer the Holy Spirit is asked to take up His dwelling in the sick person, in keeping with the words of St. Paul: "Loving Master, look down from Your holy sanctuary on high, and at this hour draw us together, sinners and unworthy servants, under the sheltering grace of the Holy Spirit. Abide in these Your people"[3] (cf. 1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19). The Holy Spirit is symbolized and communicated by means of the oil that the priests consecrate in the course of this mystery's celebration, oil with which the sick person is anointed.

B. Secondary Purpose

Human existence is something unspeakably complex. As long as a man lives, there is no possible way of separating body and soul, and hence there can be no separation either between the working of grace in the body and its working in the soul. The very healing of the body is felt by the sick person as a grace given to him as an integral human person. The body is full of the energies of the soul; through it the soul works, and without it the soul cannot work. Hence grace does not work upon the body without also working upon the soul, but as it works upon the soul—strengthening it, purifying it of sin, and thus calming its conscience—these works in turn have a fortifying effect upon the body too, making it an instrument of the soul's activity on behalf of the good and a source of strength for the soul.

In the prayers of this mystery, therefore, a number of things are asked for simultaneously: the healing of the body, the forgiveness of sins, and the cleansing of the soul from sin. The indwelling of the Spirit has as its special purpose the purification from sin, the healing of the passions, and the raising up of man to a life of holiness and unspotted service of God. Insofar as sin is a sickness of the soul, especially when it has grown into a habitual passion and as such has become a cause of the body's sickness, holy unction is deemed to be a healing of the body as much as of the soul; in the sacrament, God is called "physician of our souls and bodies."[4] Holy unction is considered a necessity also for the healing of these deeply rooted passions, for even if the sins that proceed from them or that have produced them have been confessed, the disordered passions themselves cannot be healed as easily as that, and it is impossible that new sinful acts will not spring forth from them almost continuously.

The insistence with which prayer is offered in this sacrament for the sick person's healing from the passions of the soul alongside his bodily healing, an insistence that is far greater than that found in the mystery of repentance, makes us understand that the mystery of holy unction has a special reference to these roots of sin. Ultimately, sinfulness comes down to this advanced stage of man's sinful weaknesses, a stage that results from disregarding both the mystery of repentance and the collaboration with the grace received in baptism and chrismation that is required of a Christian. The confession of sins that the sick person makes prior to receiving the holy unction has brought him the forgiveness of the sins confessed. However, he has not had time, through a collaboration with the grace that he has once again received, to melt away the mass of his sinful weaknesses (nourished as these have been by long-standing habits of sin), weaknesses that are themselves often the explanation for his bodily illness. Or perhaps in his confession the sick man was not able to give any clear description of these weaknesses, which often are lost within a fog of undefined vagueness.

Furthermore, just as it is not possible to make a separation between the body and the soul, it is equally impossible, when dealing with the human being as a whole, to separate the influence that visible phenomena have upon him from the influence exercised by the invisible forces of evil. Freedom from these visible influences takes place when the bodily senses are strengthened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, who enters into the senses when they are anointed with the consecrated oil. In this way the very senses of the body in themselves are cleansed, sanctified, and fortified against the temptations that come from exterior things, and also from the invisible forces of evil that are at work through these things.

The prayers of the mystery of holy unction, therefore, ask God simultaneously for bodily healing, forgiveness of sins, cure of the disordered passions, freedom from evil influences over the senses, and the driving away of the Enemy; all these petitions are offered so that the sick person can regain health in body and soul, and live a pure life dedicated to the service of God. This demonstrates that the mystery of holy unction does not have death in view, as in Catholicism, but life: a life lived in health and holiness.

The activity of the Holy Spirit in human beings, which is what is prayed for and imparted through the mystery of holy unction, could not take effect, however, were there no opening of the soul through faith and repentance on the part of those who are sick. With regard to faith, some reflection is necessary as to why no confession of faith is asked for from the sick person who receives this sacrament. A confession of faith is asked for in baptism, which is united with chrismation, and also in the Eucharist; a confession of sins is required alongside a confession of faith in the mystery of repentance. In the case of holy unction, however, the priests have solid grounds for considering that this confession of faith can be taken as something already made, just as the bishop does in the case of those to be ordained deacons or priests, on the basis of their certificates of theological preparation and their sacramental confessions prior to ordination; or in the case of those being married, on the basis of their prior exchange of consent. The very fact that the sick person has called the priests to pray for him implies his faith that God is at work through this mystery. Normally, moreover, the person has gone to confession beforehand. Indeed, the sick person shows a marked sensibility toward God by this act of recognizing his own personal human incapacity, and that of man in general, and of placing his highest hope in God. God becomes more transparent to the sick person through the medium of his bodily weakness, and hence the priest relies on the faith and penitence of the sick person and prays to God for His healing power and purifying grace.

The following texts from the prayers of the service of holy unction illustrate and firmly establish these purposes implicit in the mystery and also the opening up of the sick person to them.

In the prayer already cited above, which follows the reading of the second Gospel and which prays for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the sick person, the priest says that such persons are "aware of their own failings, yet draw near in faith. Accepting them in Your compassion, whether they have transgressed in word or deed or thought, forgive them, and purge them of all guilt. Abiding in them, preserve them the rest of their lives, so that they may no longer be an object of joy for the Evil One, and that in them Your all-holy name may be glorified."[5] Already before this petition, prayer had been made for the bodily healing of the sick person.

In one of the odes sung before the consecration of the oil, this petition is made: "Look down from heaven in Your loving-kindness, infinite One, and by Your unseen hand seal our senses, loving Lord.

To those who turn to You seeking remission of sins, grant healing of soul and body, through Your holy Oil, so that they may glorify You wholeheartedly, magnifying Your might."[6] The priest anoints the primary senses of the sick person with oil in the sign of the cross, while the significance of the cross is shown through a hymn that is chanted as the priest is performing the anointing: "O Lord, You gave us Your cross as a weapon against the devil, who shakes and trembles, unable to stand the sight of its power; for You have raised the dead and destroyed death."[7] Through the sign of the cross, Christ Himself, the one sacrificed, comes to dwell in the sick person, imparting the power to abstain from sin and to resist any selfishness that comes from our sinful impulses; with this power the soul of the sick person will be strengthened so that it can overcome the sickness of the body. The cross is the means by which power comes from the body of Christ, who conquered death. And against the action of the invisible powers, prayer is offered to gain the invisible assistance of the saints, the martyrs, and the Mother of the Lord.

It should also be noted that normally the mystery of holy unction is celebrated with the participation of a good number of the faithful, who join their prayers with those of the priests. From this broader communion and from this demonstration of love that so many of his neighbors give to the sick man in his state of illness and incapacity, the sick person likewise draws the strength to recover in both body and spirit. In the celebration of this mystery, the truth of Khomiakov's dictum is proved once again: "We know that when any one of us falls he falls alone; but no one is saved alone. He who is saved is saved in the Church, as a member of her, and in unity with all her other members . . . All the angels pray for us, the apostles, martyrs, and patriarchs, and above them all, the Mother of our Lord."[8]

The very fact that this mystery is celebrated by a number of priests together (ideally by seven, but at least by two) shows the will of the Church to set in motion large numbers of her forces, through their communion in love and prayer, and to put many persons into action so that one of her members might escape from the helpless and painful condition in which he finds himself. It is especially in times of sickness that human beings stand in need of sympathy and communion, and it is particularly then that we can see how true it is that a man draws strength from the love shown by many other people.

However, this communion provides strength to the sick person not merely through what is human about it but foremost because all those who come and enter into communion with their sick neighbor come with faith in Christ. And it is Christ who overcame every sickness and helplessness, who conquered death, who cured some men by means of the prayers of others, and who said that where two or three were gathered together in His name—that is, with faith in Him and with mutual love for one another—He Himself was there in the midst of them (Matt 18:20). These neighbors help the sick person only because they, through their faith and prayers, make the presence and the power of Christ something transparent and active; only because they facilitate the communion that the sick person has with Christ through his faith, a faith their own faith helps to strengthen.

As in all the mysteries, so too in the mystery of holy unction communion with the priest and with the other believers helps us to enter into communion with Christ. In the preceding pages we have provided the necessary details regarding the mystery's constitutive elements: the priests as celebrants; the recipient of the sacrament; the consecrated oil; the priest's use of his hand to anoint the sick person with oil in the name of the Lord; and the openness of the sick person, through faith and repentance, to the grace that heals illnesses of both body and soul, a grace that imparts to him the forgiveness of sins.

The members of the body are anointed seven times in the form of the cross, after the reading of the seven Gospel and Epistle passages and after the recitation of the seven prayers. This is because seven are the gifts of the Holy Spirit and seven is the number of the evil spirits expelled from the sinful woman (Luke 8:2), for the number seven symbolizes the totality of the forms of evil (Luke 11:26), but also of the gifts of God. After the number seven comes the number eight, which is the symbol of eternal rest and blessedness.

The whole service of the mystery reveals an insistence that the illness of body and soul into which the sick person has fallen makes him unfit for normal life or threatens him with the end of his earthly life. Through the power of Christ, he must be helped in a persistent way to become healthy in body and soul, or at least in soul, if his death appears to be imminent.

The Church makes a maximum effort to prepare a sick person for communion with Christ and to open him up to communion with his brothers and sisters for several reasons: because our salvation consists in communion with Christ, the all-loving divine Person who has become man; and because it would be possible for such a person to pass from his present sickness into death while lacking, due to his disordered passions, the capacity to enter into that communion because he has made no progress in it through the other mysteries and through his active collaboration with their graces. In effect this maximum effort toward the sick person is made in order to lead him to salvation. To this end the Church uses many priests; many prayers; and many fellow believers, all praying together, open to communion with Christ and longing to strengthen their communion with the one who is sick.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, 10 vols., New York, 1885–87
ET	English translation
NPNF^1	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, ed. Philip Schaff, 14 vols., New York, 1886–89
NPNF^2	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 14 vols., New York, 1890–99
PG	Patrologia Graeca, ed. J.-P. Migne, 161 vols., Paris, 1857–86
PL	Patrologia Latina, ed. J.-P. Migne, 217 vols., Paris, 1844–55

NOTES

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Chapter 1

Christ's Saving Mysteries: Creation Unified and Made New in the Church

1. [The Romanian word "*taine*," which Fr. Staniloae used here and throughout this volume, properly and commonly designates any reality that transcends human understanding. However, "*taine*" is also the everyday word used in Romanian to denote what are called in Western European languages the "sacraments" of the Christian Church. Our translation will make use of both words in an attempt to convey the nuances in particular contexts and to avoid too much repetition. – trans.]

2. St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* (PG 91:1084D).

3. "The end of the movement of those who are moved is 'eternal well-being' itself which is God who is the giver of being as well as of well-being. For God is the beginning and the end" (St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum 7*, PG 91:1073C; ET in *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: Selected Writings from St. Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken [Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003], 50–51).

4. [The Romanian word translated here as the "reasons" or "inner principles" (*rațiunile*) of created things corresponds to the Greek *logoi* and recurs throughout the work of Fr. Staniloae. These reasons or *logoi* are the objects of the first stage of contemplation (natural contemplation) and, as the intelligible structure of created things (cf. the Latin *ratio*), they are

all contained within the Logos Himself as the unitary and unifying cosmic principle. Cf. "Logos," in *The Philokalia: The Complete Text*, vol. 1, trans. and ed. G. E. H. Palmer, P. Sherrard, and K. Ware (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), 363. – trans.]

5. "The one Logos is many *logoi* and the many *logoi* are One. Because the One goes forth out of goodness into individual being, creating and preserving them, the One is many. Moreover the many are directed toward the One and are providentially guided in that direction. It is as though they were drawn to an all-powerful center that had built into it the beginnings of the lines that go out from it and that gathers them all together. In this way the many are one" (St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum 7*, PG 91:1081B–C; ET Blowers and Wilken, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 57).

6. "Just as God, by creating all things and bringing them into existence with His infinite power, brings them together, circumscribes them, and binds them tightly to one another and to Himself through His providence . . . in the same way the Church shows herself doing the same things with God, as an image, as archetype" (St. Maximus the Confessor, *Mystagogy*, PG 91:664–65).

7. Ibid.

8. Each component of the universe is a church simply because of its miraculous construction. It shows that it has been made by God to be a place for Him. Olivier Clément says that there is a monastery in France [the former Cistercian abbey of Sénanque] where the guide, before introducing visitors to the particular beauties of the monastic church, first shows them to an exterior room with large scientific photographs in which the rhythms of the stars and the structures of minerals are revealed as great temples ("Itineraire dans un monde 'sans Dieu,'" *Contacts* 27, no. 89 [1975]: 12–44, at 19). The words "Wisdom has built herself a house" (Prov 9:1) apply not only to the world as a whole, but also to each of its component parts.

9. Cf. M. J. Scheeben: "The God-Man . . . is manifestly the great 'sacrament' . . . The hypostatic union with the Word is here the mystery contained in the sacrament of the flesh. This flesh, itself raised up by virtue of the divinity to a spiritual, supernatural mode of existence, becomes in its turn the mystery contained within the sacrament of the Eucharist . . . In connection with the Incarnation and the Eucharist, the Church becomes a great sacrament, a sacramental mystery; visible exteriorly, appearing under this aspect as a human society, it hides interiorly the mystery of a marvelous union with the incarnate Christ who dwells in its bosom—and with the Holy Spirit who renders it fruitful and guides it" (*Le Mystère de l'Eglise et ses sacrements*, ed. and trans. A. Kerkvoork, 2nd ed. [Paris: Cerf, 1956], 102–3).

10. "Through His Passion and in accordance with His humanity Christ has become Spirit, that is, the transfigured Kyrios, the High Priest, He who imparts the Spirit, hence the head of the church" (Odo Casel, *Das christliche Kultmysterium*, 4th rev. ed. [Regensburg, Germany: F. Pustet, 1960], 31). St. Gregory of Nazianzus says, "He [Christ] will come again with His glorious Presence to judge the quick and the dead; no longer flesh, nor yet without

a body, according to the laws which He alone knows of a more godlike body [*θεοειδέστερου σώματος*], that He may be seen by those who pierced Him, and on the other hand may remain as God without carnality" (*Oration on Holy Baptism*, PG 36:424; ET NPNF^2 12:377).

11. "In place of a bodily, visible presence there enters in this way the spiritual presence through faith and the Mysteries, [a presence] which, however, is not thereby weaker than the other, but stronger, because it is wholly founded on the Spirit. Even the flesh of the Lord is now become spiritual [pneumatic]" (Odo Casel, "Mysteriengegenwart," in *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft* 8 [1928]: 145–224, at 154–55). Here Casel cites a text from St. Leo the Great: "The Resurrection [of the Lord] is not the end of the flesh, but its transformation. Through the increase of power, the substance of the flesh is not destroyed" (*Sermon 71*, § 4, PL 54:388). Casel continues, "It is not the *kenosis*, but rather the divine strength of the transfigured flesh, that shows itself in the Mysteries . . . they mediate divine strength.'"

12. Even a Protestant, Joseph Sittler [a member of the United Lutheran Church in America], has declared in a paper, given at the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in New Delhi (1961), that salvation must be seen within the horizon of creation as a whole, abandoning the dualism of Western Christianity that condemns nature and seeks a liberation from the physical world (as Bultmann has done more recently). The redemption of the cosmos is what must be affirmed, not as something opposed to the salvation of the person, but as implied within it. "Unless the reference and the power of the redemptive act includes the whole of man's experience and environment, straight out to its farthest horizon, then the redemption is incomplete. There is and will always remain something of evil to be overcome . . . It is Irenaeus, and not the western and vastly more influential Augustine, who must be our mentor. The problem forced upon us by the events of the present decade is not soluble by the covert dualism of nature and grace. At a certain period in Christian thought and practical life, this dualism worked itself out in the dualism of church and world, of spiritual and temporal. But the time when Christian theology and Christian life could operate with such a view of things is long passed" ("Called to Unity," in *Evocations of Grace: The Writings of Joseph Sittler on Ecology, Theology, and Ethics*, ed. Steven Bouma-Prediger and Peter Bakken [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000], 40–41). "The same . . . appears also in Irenaeus' attitude toward the sacraments as compared with that of the church of the Middle Ages. For Irenaeus the union of spiritual and material benefit in the Eucharist symbolizes the ultimate unity of nature and grace implied in Christian salvation. But for Aquinas that the sacraments are administered in a material element is merely God's gracious concession to man's regrettably sensuous nature (P.II. QI, A.8). For Irenaeus, the Incarnation and saving work of Jesus Christ meant that the promise of grace was held out to the whole of nature, and that henceforth nothing could be called common or unclean. For the church of the Middle Ages, on the other hand, nature was essentially common, and, if not positively unclean, at least seriously

deficient in that shining whiteness of the saints . . ." (Allan D. Galloway, *The Cosmic Christ*, 128ff., quoted in Sittler, "Called to Unity," 42).

13. Sittler realizes that for this an ontological Christology is necessary, a Christ understood as the factor transforming the body and the cosmos. But it seems from our perspective that the theoretical affirmation of the necessity of a Christology of this kind would also demand as its conclusion the necessity of the spiritualization of nature and of the human body through the Holy Spirit, so as to adapt these to the sanctified body of the Lord. This in turn would demand that the West renounce its ideal of the consumer society and adopt the ideal of a society where the passions would be controlled and purified. He says, "But we do not have, at least not in such effective force as to have engaged the thought of the common life, a daring, penetrating, life-affirming Christology of nature. The theological magnificence of cosmic Christology lies, for the most part, still tightly folded in the Church's innermost heart and memory. Its power is nascent among us all in our several styles of preaching, teaching, worship; its waiting potency is available for release in kerygmatic theology, in moral theology, in liturgical theology, in sacramental theology . . . Our vocabulary of praise has become personal, pastoral, too purely spiritual, static" (Sittler, "Called to Unity," 46).

14. See the two previous quotations from Sittler.

15. Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, trans. W. J. O'Hara (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), 18.

16. Ibid., 23.

17. Ibid., 41.

18. Odo Casel, in his dispute with the Catholic theologian Bernhard Pochmann, who wanted to see in the sacraments nothing more than the "effect of grace" caused by the death of Christ, says that this theory was dominant "almost exclusively and unilaterally in the more recent theology" ("Glaube, Gnosis, Mysterium," in *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft* 15 [1941]: 155–305, at 220–31). See also Dumitru Staniloae, "The Nature of the Sacraments in the Three [Christian] Confessions" [in Romanian], *Ortodoxia* 8, no. 1 (1956): 3–28, at 13–15.

19. Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, 87 and 93.

20. Service of Holy Baptism, ET *Sacraments and Services*, bk. 1, *Sacraments*, trans. Leonidas Contos, ed. Spencer T. Kezios (Northridge, CA: Narthex Press, 1995), 10.

21. Prayer of absolution from the Sacrament of Confession, in *Molitfelnic* [Euchologion] (Bucharest, 1965), 63. [The Greek Church uses a different prayer of absolution than the one used in the Romanian and Russian Churches. These Churches adopted, in the eighteenth century, the form for the prayer of absolution that was introduced in the public ritual by Peter Moghila in 1646. – trans.]

22. That is, at that very moment.

23. "It is the Father who is reconciled, the Son who reconciles, while the Holy Spirit is bestowed as a gift on those who have become friends" (Nicho-

las Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, trans. Carmino J. deCatanzaro [Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974], 74).

24. Ibid., 65.

25. Ibid., 67.

26. Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, 100.

Chapter 2

Baptism: The Mystery of Rebirth through Water and the Spirit

1. Olivier Clément, "Nicodème," *Contacts* 26, no. 87 (1974): 200–6, at 202.

2. "Sin, as separation and as failure, rendered the universe and man's heart opaque to the Spirit . . . Then the opacity of this world is ripped apart by the newness of that which is on high: the Word becomes flesh. In him water and the Spirit are united again; he immerses Himself in the Jordan, and the Spirit descends upon the waters. His resurrection will complete the transformation of the water of death into living water. His body is a body penetrated by the Spirit, *soma pneumatikon*, a new state of matter that is also made manifest, in the stories of the saints, through occurrences of luminosity, transfiguration, weightlessness. At Pentecost, the Spirit descends in force inside this 'pneumatized' Body that will become the ecclesial Body. And Pentecost hasn't ended: the Spirit never ceases, in the Church, to descend upon the matter of the world in order to transform it into baptismal water, to descend upon the death of the world in order to make the Resurrection manifest there" (Clément, "Nicodème," 203–4).

3. "The Incarnation was the 'baptism' of God in human nature and through it in creation and history, which is the premise of the mystery of man's baptism in the divine life" (Nicholas Cabasilas, in Panagiotis Nellas, *Ἡ ἐν Χριστῶ δικαίωσις κατὰ Νικόλαον Καβάσιλαν*, MS [Athens, 1974], 118).

4. "Why then do we not observe the same order as He, but begin where He left off and reach the end where He begins? It is because He descended in order that we might ascend. It is by the same path that it was His task to descend, that it is ours to ascend. As in the case of a ladder, that which was His last step as He descended is for us the first step as we ascend" (Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 66). "It is not possible for those who have not died to sin to live for God. So it is of God alone to be able to slay sin" (ibid., 57).

5. "For He was absolute cleansing; He had no need of cleansing; but it was for you that He was purified, just as it was for you that, though He had no flesh, yet He is clothed with flesh" (St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration on Holy Baptism* 29, PG 36:400; ET NPNF^2 7:370). "But John baptizes, Jesus comes to Him . . . perhaps to sanctify the Baptist himself, but certainly to bury the whole of the old Adam in the water; and before this and for the sake of this, to sanctify [the] Jordan . . . Jesus goeth up out of the water . . . for

with Himself He carries up the world . . . and sees the heaven opened which Adam had shut against himself and all his posterity" (idem, *Oration on the Holy Lights* 15–16, PG 36:352–53; ET NPNF^2 7:357–58).

6. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lecture 20* (NPNF^2 7:148).

7. Ibid., emphasis added.

8. Theophanes of Nicea says, "Having found His image distorted by sins and the divine likeness abandoned, He knew that this must be first melted and then rebuilt and to restore in this way the original beauty and to make it even greater. He does this through divine baptism. For He introduces His creative power, by which in the beginning He had created man after the divine image and likeness, and He Himself enters and is baptized in it. First, in order that the grace that reshapes things may be established in the water, for He who lifts the sin of the world had no need of cleansing. Secondly, to attract to brotherhood those reborn through baptism, making Himself the firstborn among many brothers, owing to this same manner of supernatural birth according to the flesh. He paints the baptismal font of divine baptism as an image of the virginal and pure bosom in which He was formed like us and then was born" (*Epistle 3*, PG 150:329).

9. Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, trans. deCatanzaro, 80–81.

10. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Adoration in Spirit and Truth*, bk. 10 (PG 68:708C–D).

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration on Holy Baptism* (PG 36:417); ET NPNF^2 7:375.

14. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration on Holy Baptism* (PG 36:408); ET NPNF^2 7:373.

15. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration on Holy Baptism* (PG 36:405, 407); ET NPNF^2 7:372, adapted.

16. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration on Holy Baptism* (PG 36:404); ET NPNF^2 7:371.

17. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration on Holy Baptism* (PG 36:405); ET NPNF^2 7:372.

18. "If we deviate from the good and from movement which is in accord with nature, we are carried in the direction of irrational and unnatural inconsistency (ἀνυπαρχίαν)" (St. Maximus the Confessor, *Scholia on the Divine Names* 7.4, PG 4:305B–C).

19. Cabasilas, in Nellas, *Ἡ ἐν Χριστῷ δικαίωσις*, 76.

20. Idem, *The Life in Christ* (PG 150:532A).

21. Idem, in Nellas, *Ἡ ἐν Χριστῷ δικαίωσις*, 77.

22. Ibid., 77.

23. Ibid., 239n369.

24. Idem, *The Life in Christ*, trans. deCatanzaro, 67–68.

25. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration on Holy Baptism* 8, 10 (PG 36:368–69); ET NPNF^2 7:362.

26. St. John Chrysostom declares that the worst slavery is slavery to sin. Even someone who is free in his external circumstances can suffer from this type of enslavement. "Who is a slave if not the sinner? In my view even the great dignitary lacks all nobility if he has the soul of a slave" [unidentified].

27. Service of Holy Baptism, in *Sacraments and Services*, 19.

28. [In Orthodox terminology, the word "altar" denotes both the area behind the icon screen (iconostasis), and the table upon which the *antimension* is placed and on which the holy oblation takes place. – trans.]

29. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration on Holy Baptism* 26 (PG 36:396); ET NPNF^2 7:369, adapted.

30. [Here Fr. Staniloae conveys the third of the three meanings that Ion Bria describes for the term "economy" (*oikonomia*) in Orthodox usage: "(a) God's plan regarding the destiny of creation and of the human person, especially the preparation of salvation in the Old Testament and its completion in the New Testament . . . (b) The Holy Fathers make a distinction between *theology* (the doctrine on the essence and inter-Trinitarian relations of the divine Persons) and *oikonomia* (the manifestation and operation of God's love in the world, that is, the history of the Incarnation and redemption in and through Jesus Christ) . . . (c) One of the principal modalities, as opposed to *akriveia*, used by the Church in the application of canonical norms, which consists in a pastoral attitude of condescension and compassion" (*Dictionary of Orthodox Theology* [in Romanian] [Bucharest: Eibmbor, 1981], 204–5). In contrast with the final meaning, *akriveia* is "the strict application of the canons when the doctrine and tradition of the Church need to be observed rigorously" (ibid., 18). – trans.]

31. St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, bk. 2 (PG 7:784A); Justin of Rome, *Questions and Answers* 56 (PG 6:1297C); Origen, *Homily 8 on Leviticus*, § 3 (PG 12:496B): "The Church has received the tradition of giving baptism even to very young children from the apostles." See also Origen, *Commentary on Romans* (PG 14:1047B).

32. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration on Holy Baptism* 17 (PG 36:380D–381A); ET NPNF^2 7:365, adapted.

Chapter 3

Chrismation: "The Seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit"

1. "Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" and the litany. This could be explained also by the fact that Chrismation begins with the sanctification of the chrism by the bishops. In any case, when it is administered to the newly baptized, it is connected to the service of Baptism without having its own beginning.

2. Service of Holy Baptism, in *Sacraments and Services*, 29.

3. Ibid., 28–29.

4. Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, 103.

5. Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973), 75.

6. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Adoration in Spirit and Truth*, bk. 10 (PG 68:752C).

7. St. Macarius of Egypt, *Homily 16*, § 1.

8. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lecture 21* (NPNF² 7:150, adapted).

9. Ibid., 149.

10. Recently, voices have begun to be raised among Catholics that express the desire for the sacrament of confirmation to be imparted immediately after baptism. See Athanasius Wintersig, "Pfarrei und Mysterium," *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft* 5 (1925): 136–143, at 139: "Through baptism the initiation of newer, younger members into the ecclesial community is only begun, not completed. In the circumstances of church life today, the day of one's first Holy Communion is the high point of initiation in the consciousness of the young and the old, for there the children participate in the Eucharistic celebration with the adults as the highest expression of the Christian life. This feeling would be quite correct were Communion preceded by confirmation as in the early Church. There the initiation took place through baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist as the banquet of the mysteries. Even today, in those dioceses where it has been the custom down to the present day, the practice of celebrating confirmation before first Communion is still widely permitted . . . It is only confirmation that provides for the young Christian full participation in the universal priesthood of the faithful and hence makes him fully a citizen of the community."

11. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Adoration in Spirit and Truth*, bk. 10 (PG 68:688A).

12. Ibid., 688B, 689B.

13. Ibid., 708D.

14. St. Mark the Ascetic, *On Baptism*, in the *Romanian Philokalia* [in Romanian], trans. Dumitru Staniloae (Sibiu, Romania, 1947), 1:280; cf. PG 65:985–1028.

15. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lecture 21* (NPNF² 7:150, adapted).

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Adoration in Spirit and Truth*, bk. 11 (PG 68:760B).

Chapter 4

The Divine Eucharist: The Mystery of the Lord's Body and Blood

1. St. Eutychius, *On Pascha and the Holy Eucharist* (PG 86B:2395–97): "After the Mystical Pascha performed by the Lord in Zion [at the Last Supper] at the beginning of the fourteenth day, which is the second day of the Jewish Pascha [or Passover], it is no longer Pascha at the end of the fourteenth day. For the things of the Law have come to an end. Also, the offering of the sheaf on the sixteenth day [the third day of Passover] no longer

takes place according to the commandment of the Law, for the Lord offers this Pascha [Himself] for the salvation of the entire dough [the flour that is human nature]. From the sixteenth day there begins the count of the seven weeks that ended with Pentecost. At the beginning of this sixteenth day, which indicated the first day of the following week, our Lord rose again and offered Himself instead of the sheaf to God the Father for the salvation of the human race. Therefore, the offering of the sheaf no longer takes place, because instead of the sheaf the Lord offers Himself to God the Father . . . Thus, just as He rose from the dead and offered Himself to the Father on our behalf, He became the image of the sheaf [Lev 23:10–11]; so too, instead of the lamb, He sacrifices Himself mystically in anticipation at the beginning of the fourteenth day, presenting Himself in the image [of the bread]. So this mystical Pascha [the mystical sacrifice at the Last Supper] is the firstfruits and the pledge of the real sacrifice; and the real one is the perfect [Pascha], according to the words 'I will no longer eat of it [this Passover] until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God' [Luke 22:16]. This is His Holy Resurrection, because once risen from the dead, He can no longer die.

"This is also the case when we die mystically in holy baptism; afterward we really die, whether in martyrdom or not. Our mystical death is not foreign to our real death, even if the first is completed in the latter. In the mystical sacrifice as well, we gain a life different from the previous one, a pledge of the resurrection; in that mystical sacrifice we receive the forgiveness of sins, adoption, and sanctification, and we become co-inheritors with Christ. Thus the mystical things are not separated from real things, even if the former are fulfilled in the latter. The Church therefore celebrates both the remembrance of the fourteenth day on Great and Holy Thursday, when the Lord performed the mystical Pascha and sacrificed Himself on the fourteenth day. But the fulfillment and plenitude of the mystical feast is manifested at the Holy Resurrection, which takes place at the beginning of the sixteenth day, or on Sunday [morning]."

This explanation of St. Eutychius eliminates the basis of those Orthodox in the West whose innovation (borrowed from Catholics) of receiving Communion in the evening is founded on the Last Supper. This was not practiced in the Orthodox Church in the past except during Great Lent, at the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts (after fasting the whole day). We who live after the Resurrection of the Lord must partake of the Christ who was sacrificed and risen in a real way. This is the partaking of the Christ who was perfected through His real death and Resurrection, whereas at the Last Supper the apostles had received the pledge and the mystical inception of this state of eternal resurrection of Christ, who passed through real death. This practice [of receiving communion in the evening] is an expression of the Western spirit that lays emphasis on the death of the Lord, so much so that His Resurrection and our participation in it are forgotten. They [Western Christians] are preoccupied only with the imitation of the historical Christ who approaches death, and not with the partaking of the risen Christ. How can one celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord in the evening? The life of resurrection begins in the morning, not in the evening. We see here the immanentist spirit of the West being manifested. The Eucharist, which is given with a view toward the Resurrection, is thus being confused with baptism, which helps us in our effort toward an earthly life without sin.

2. "Baptism renders dead the inclination of our will toward the pleasures of life for the sake of virtue, and the cup [i.e., the chalice] convinces the pious believers to hold truth even higher than life" (Maximus the Confessor, *To Thalassius 30*, in the *Romanian Philokalia*, 3:114). This means that he who in the Eucharist has attained full union with the Person of Christ, or with the truth, no longer descends to the virtues that are only a preparation for this encounter and only an effort directed toward love, and not the true rest in that love. No longer does either death or life with its possibilities for attaining virtue separate from Christ the one who has known Him; such a person is ready to receive even death for Him, knowing that by remaining in Christ he will pass through death with Him to resurrection with Him.

3. "Moreover, Christ has done even this [given us His own flesh] to spur us on to greater love. And to show the love He has for us He has made it possible for those who desire, not merely to look upon Him, but even to touch Him and to consume Him and to fix their teeth in His flesh and to be commingled with Him; in short, to fulfill all their love" (St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 46 on the Gospel of St. John*, in *Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist, Homilies 1–47*, trans. Sister Thomas Aquinas Goggin, The Fathers of the Church [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1957], 468–69).

4. Theophanes of Nicea depicts the distinction between baptism and Eucharist by declaring that what starts in baptism is completed in the Eucharist. If through baptism Christ makes human persons His brothers, through the Eucharist He makes them members of His body. Thus the Eucharist offers a much greater degree of attachment and union. "What follows after this? He does not only want to make the faithful His brothers in the same image with Him, for He does not stop here with His benevolence. But He also makes them members of His body so that He is rather called our head, as [the head] of those who are both members and body—not only brothers—on account of the relationship with Him, a relationship that is above words and reason. Therefore, those whom He intends to unite with Himself as members of His body He first, through baptism, causes to be of the same image with the head, then through the Communion and partaking of His own body and blood, He attaches to Himself these deiform members, and [He attaches them] among themselves. That is why baptism precedes the Holy Eucharist" (*Epistle 3*, PG 150:329–40).

5. The same idea is affirmed in other ancient Oriental Liturgies. See the texts in Henri de Lubac, *Le Catholicisme. Les aspects sociaux du dogme* [Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1938], 94–95.

6. *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 9 (ANF 7:380, adapted).

7. "The Spirit, whose divine operation has prepared Christ's body out of flesh [the operation of binding together the body, thus of realizing its unity], is also present at the formation of His mystical body, that is, at the offering of the Eucharist. He who descended as a consuming fire upon Elijah's sacrifice now also consumes the stains left by the human dross, which are opposed to the unifying power of the Mystery. And just as the first time the Spirit descended upon the apostles not to confine them in a closed circle, but to spark in them the fire of the all-encompassing love, so He repeats the same thing as the Spirit of Christ every time that Christ offers Himself again, so that all the scattered children of God may be gathered together. Within the space of the Last Supper, which every church building represents, the feast of Pentecost therefore is united with the Last Supper" (de Lubac, *Le Catholicisme, 99*).

8. St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 82 on the Gospel of St. Matthew* (NPNF^1 10:495–96, adapted).

9. Ibid., 495.

10. Ibid., 492.

11. St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 47 on the Gospel of St. John* (NPNF^1 14:169–70).

12. De Lubac, *Le Catholicisme*, 86–87.

13. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Adoration in Spirit and Truth*: "For it is said that what is offered to God is consecrated" (bk. 10, PG 68:688A); "The sacrifice sanctifies the one who touches it. For we approach the holy things for no other reason than to partake of Christ through the unutterable and spiritual sacrifice" (bk. 12, col. 829); and "When we eat the bread from heaven, that is, Christ or the bloodless sacrifice, we are blessed" (bk. 13, col. 853).

14. Ibid., bk. 17, col. 1096B.

15. Ibid., bk. 16, col. 1016B.

16. Ibid., 1013D.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., bk. 17, col. 1113B.

19. Ibid., bk. 15, col. 973B.

20. Ibid., bk. 16, col. 1013D.

21. Petition from the Great and Small Litanies, offered at every liturgical service. ET *The Liturgikon*, trans. Leonidas Contos, ed. Spencer T. Kezios (Northridge, CA: Narthex Press, 1996), 69.

22. Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, in *The Liturgikon*, 86.

23. Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.

24. Petre Vintilescu, *Liturghiile bizantine* [Byzantine Liturgies] (Bucharest, 1943), 26.

25. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Adoration in Spirit and Truth*, bk. 16 (PG 68:1026).

26. In this sense the saints also give themselves up as sacrifices: "So the mind of the saints is sanctified; their life is holy, above physical pleasure, free from worldly cares, beautiful through its balanced thinking, and not

scattered toward worldly things. Thus they give themselves up to Him as a sweet fragrance" (ibid., 1021C).

27. Ibid., bk. 17, col. 1112A; and bk. 12, cols. 736, 768.

28. Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, in *The Liturgikon*, 86.

29. Nicholas Cabasilas affirms this in his *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy* (PG 150:440D). See also Ene Branişte's study *The Explanation of the Liturgy according to Nicholas Cabasilas* [in Romanian] (Bucharest, 1943), 87–96.

30. Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, in *The Liturgikon*, 91.

31. M. Jugie names this solution "subtle and ingenious" (quoted in Branişte, *Explanation of the Liturgy*, 92). In fact it is not a personal solution but the Church's constant teaching on Christ's sacrificial state after His Resurrection so that His sacrifice may always be for us a source of the power for sacrifice.

32. Christos Androutsos, *Dogmatica Bisericii Ortodoxe* [The Dogmatics of the Orthodox Church] (Sibiu, Romania, 1930), 397–98.

33. "Emmanuel was ordained by God the Father as Lawgiver and High Priest over us, offering Himself as sacrifice for us [Heb 9:14]" (St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Adoration in Spirit and Truth*, bk. 10, PG 68:673). Aaron, as an image closer to our own, was also ordained from above (ibid., 672C).

34. Ibid., bk. 17, col. 1085D–1088A.

35. "This approach to the mystery of the real presence of Christ helps us to broaden our vision and see at the point of intersection of the cross here and now the fullness of its vertical and its horizontal lines representing the wholeness of the mystery of the Ecclesia, being the Body of Christ and sharing in it through the eucharistic sacrifice. This is not an isolated act; there are not only the objective elements; there is no magical sacred moment of transformation of matter" (Nikos A. Nissiotis, "Worship, Eucharist and Intercommunion: An Orthodox Reflection," *Youth* 6 [1962]: 44).

"The doctrine [of either transubstantiation or consubstantion] is at fault in being concerned with the object and not the subject, with the bread and not the person" (Paul Evdokimov, *Orthodoxy* [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2011], 252). However, it is certainly necessary to stress that the union with Christ should not be viewed outside matter, for the body is indissolubly linked to matter. And so is Christ through the Incarnation.

36. Great emphasis, however, is placed on this relationship in pastoral service. But does not a pastoral service whose connections through prayer with the mysteries are not cultivated run the risk of becoming a means to manipulate the faithful in a worldly manner?

37. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Adoration in Spirit and Truth*, bk. 13 (PG 68:847).

Chapter 5

Repentance: The Mystery of Forgiveness

1. St. John Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, bk. 3 (NPNF^1 9:47).

2. See a great number of such testimonies in Dumitru Staniloae, "Mărturisirea păcatelor şi pocăinţa în trecutul Bisericii" [The confession of sins and penance in the Church's past], *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 73, nos. 3–4 (1955): 218–51.

3. Clement of Rome, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* 51 (ANF 1:19).

4. *Epistle to the Philadelphians* 8.2 (ANF 1:79–86).

5. *Against Heresies* 1.6.3 and 1.13.7 (ANF 1:324, 336).

6. Tertullian, *On Repentance* 10 (PL 1:1354); ET ANF 3:664.

7. Such persons "so perish with their own bashfulness" (ibid.).

8. Ibid.

9. Cyprian, *Epistle 12* (ANF 5:293).

10. Ibid., *Epistle 54* (ANF 5:346).

11. Ibid.

12. Origen, *Homily 1 on Psalm 37* (PG 12:1386). "All bishops as well as all presbyters or deacons instruct us, and having instructed [us], they employ reproofs and chide with harsh words" (ibid., col. 1542).

13. *Apostolic Constitutions* 2.6.48 (ANF 7:417–18, adapted).

14. Service of Confession, *Molitfelnic* [Euchologion] (Bucharest, 1965), 55.

15. "We confess our sins to the Lord, not indeed as if He were ignorant of them, but inasmuch as by confessing satisfaction is settled, of confession repentance is born" (Tertullian, *On Repentance* 9, ANF 3:664).

16. *The Pastor of Hermas*, bk. 2, Commandment 4.3 (ANF 2:22).

17. Augustine, *Sermon 352*.

18. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.23 (NPNF^2 1:150–52).

19. St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.13 (ANF 1:334).

20. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.23 (NPNF^2 1:200).

21. Androutsos, *Dogmatica Bisericii Ortodoxe*, 404–5.

22. Liturgies of St. John Chrysostom and of St. Basil the Great; cf. 2 Cor 13:14.

23. *The Canons of the Council in Trullo* (NPNF^2 14:408, adapted).

24. A. S. Pavlov, *Nomokanon pri bol'shem Trebnike* [Nomocanon of the Great Book of Needs], 2nd ed. (Moscow, 1897), 29.

25. Karl Holl, *Enthusiasmus und Bussgewalt beim griechischen Mönchtum* [Enthusiasm and the Power of Penance in Greek Monasticism] (Leipzig, 1898), 295–96.

26. John the Faster, *Instruction for Those Who Go to Confession* (PG 88:1889–1918).

27. Ibid., 1904–5.

28. St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, *Carte de suflet folositoare* [known in English as *A Most Edifying Book*], Romanian translation from the Greek (n.p., 1789), 43.

29. *Molitfelnic*, 51–52.

30. Pavel Florensky, *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*, trans. Boris Yakim (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 302–3.

31. Ibid., 303.

Chapter 6

Ordination: Priesthood as the Living Image of Christ

1. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra* (PG 69:72–73).

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., 100.

4. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 2* (PG 35:501); ET NPNF^2 7:224, adapted.

5. St. Ignatius the God-Bearer, *Epistle to the Ephesians* 3 (ANF 1:50).

6. St. Cyprian, *Epistle 66*, § 8; see *Epistle 68*, § 8, n. 2794, in ANF 5:373.

7. Palladius, *Dialogue on the Life of St. John Chrysostom* (PG 47:35).

8. St. Ignatius, *Epistle to the Smyrneans* 8 (PG 5:713); ET ANF 1:89–90.

9. Idem, *Epistle to the Trallians* 3 (PG 5:780); ET ANF 1:67.

10. St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 2 on 2 Timothy*, § 4 (PG 62:612); ET NPNF^1 13:483.

11. *Confession of Dositheus*, Decree 10, adapted from *Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Jerusalem*, ed. J. J. Overbeck (London: Thomas Baker, 1899), 124–25.

12. Ibid., 128–29.

13. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 32* (PG 35:196); ET *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: Select Orations*, trans. Martha Vinson, The Fathers of the Church (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 204.

14. St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 3 on Colossians* (PG 62:324).

15. Service of Holy Baptism, in *Sacraments and Services*, 28–29.

16. Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love*, trans. Anthony P. Gythiel (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 87.

17. Minucius Felix, *The Octavius*, chap. 32 (ANF 4:193), in Evdokimov, *Sacrament of Love*, 89–90.

18. Origen, *In Leviticum homilia 9* (PG 12:521–22), in Evdokimov, *Sacrament of Love*, 90.

19. Evdokimov, *Sacrament of Love*, 90–91.

20. "The apostolic succession means the uninterrupted succession from the apostles of the service and priestly (and hierarchical) grace, which is to say the successive continuation of bishops up to the present time through canonical ordination by their predecessors, as well as the transmission of the apostolic teaching, order, and authority. Therefore, it means the succession in the faith, in the apostolic confession, and in the apostolic service and life not only of bishops, but also of all other clerics and laity, namely of the entire Church" (John Karmiris, *Ἡ ορθόδοξος Εκκλησιολογία* [Athens, 1973], 393).

21. Ibid., 396–97.

22. Clement of Rome, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* 42 (ANF 1:16).

23. Ibid., chaps. 42 and 44, pp. 16–17.

24. Hippolytus, *The Refutation of All Heresies* 1 (ANF 5:10).

25. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Homily on Psalm 88*, § 35 (PG 23:1104). In his *Ecclesiastical History* (bk. 1, chap. 1), Eusebius speaks of "the successions of the holy apostles" (NPNF^2 1:81).

26. "Those who were by the apostles instituted bishops in the Churches, and the succession of these men to our own times" (St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.3.1, ANF 1:415). See also *Against Heresies* 3.4.1, 4.33.8, and 5.20.1.

27. St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.26.2 (PG 7:1053); ET ANF 1:497.

28. St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.2.1 (ANF 1:415).

29. *Canons of the Council in Trullo*, Canon 12 (NPNF^2 14:350).

30. Ibid., Canon 6 (NPNF^2 14:364); Apostolic Canon 27 (ANF 7:501).

31. Evdokimov, *Sacrament of Love*, 33.

32. Evdokimov makes the bold affirmation, which does not lack some truth, that affection toward a newborn—something that is proper to the heavenly Father—is reflected more in a woman's maternity than in a man's paternity. That is why the Son of God, by becoming man, was without a father, but He could not be without a mother. "An ancient liturgical text of dogmatic contact (the *Theotokion*) defines the motherhood of the Virgin in the light of the paternity of God: 'Without a father have you given birth to the Son, the One who was born without a mother before all ages.' . . . The Nativity, then, expresses the charism of every woman to give birth to God in ruined souls . . . Mary . . . is spreading the omophorion over the world in order to 'protect' it" (*Sacrament of Love*, 34–35, 38), and to protect also all those who believe, including priests and bishops.

33. Ibid., 37.

34. Service for the Ordination of a Deacon.

35. Ibid.

36. Service for the Ordination of a Priest.

37. Ibid.

38. St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 14 on Pentecost* (PG 50:548).

39. Idem, *Homily 14 on the Acts of the Apostles* (PG 60:180); ET NPNF^2 11:90, adapted.

40. Service for the Ordination of a Bishop.

Chapter 7

Marriage: The Mystery of Human Love Crowned in Glory and Honor

1. Androutsos, *Dogmatica Bisericii Ortodoxe*, 420; Metropolitan Macarius, *Dogmatic Theology*, in Evdokimov, *Sacrament of Love*, 119.

2. Alexander Schmemann (*For the Life of the World*, 91–94) sees a link between priesthood and marriage, for man receives through both the grace to offer himself as a sacrifice to God as regards the cosmic aspects of life.

3. Evdokimov, *Sacrament of Love*, 114.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., 115.

6. St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 20 on Ephesians* (PG 62:135); ET NPNF^1 13:143.

7. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra on Genesis*, in Evdokimov, *Sacrament of Love*, 117.

8. Evdokimov, *Sacrament of Love*, 116.

9. Ibid., 115.

10. Ibid., 126, citing Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 3.14 (PG 8:1196).

11. Schiller, *Philosophical Letters: Love*, in Florensky, *Pillar and Ground*, 315.

12. Florensky, *Pillar and Ground*, 314.

13. Evdokimov, *Sacrament of Love*, 126.

14. Service for the Second Marriage, in *Molitfelnic*, 91.

15. Schmemann, *For the Life of the World*, 82.

16. St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 12 on Colossians* (PG 62:387; ET NPNF^1 13:318), cited in Evdokimov (*Sacrament of Love*, 169) as "Marriage is a mysterious icon of the Church."

17. *Stromateis* 3.10.68 (PG 8:1169), in Evdokimov, *Sacrament of Love*, 118.

18. Uncited work in Evdokimov, *Sacrament of Love*, 118.

19. Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolycus* 2.28 (ANF 2:105).

20. St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 33 on First Corinthians* (NPNF^1 12:197).

21. Idem, *Homily 2 on 1 Thessalonians* (PG 62:406), in Florensky, *Pillar and Ground*, 312. A slightly different translation is given in NPNF^1 13:331–32: "With a friend . . . he has another self."

22. Evdokimov, *Sacrament of Love*, 22–28 et passim.

23. St. John Chrysostom, *On Marriage*, in Evdokimov, *Sacrament of Love*, 120.

24. "The limit to fragmentation is not the human atom that from itself relates to the community, but a community molecule, a pair of friends, which is the principle of actions here, just as the family was this kind of molecule for the pagan community. This is a new antinomy: the person-dyad antinomy. On the one hand, the separate person is everything; on the other hand, he is something only where there are 'two or three.' 'Two or three' is something qualitatively higher than 'one,' although it is precisely Christianity that has created the idea of the absolute value of the separate person. The person can be absolutely valuable only in absolutely valuable communion, although one cannot say that the person is prior to communion or that communion is prior to the person" (Florensky, *Pillar and Ground*, 301–2).

25. Schmemann, *For the Life of the World*, 90.

26. St. Ignatius, *Epistle to Polycarp* 5 (ANF 1:95).

27. Androutsos, *Dogmatica Bisericii Ortodoxe*, 425–26.

28. Service of Holy Matrimony, in *Sacraments and Services*, 46.

29. Ibid., 55.

30. Ibid., 58.

31. Ibid., 59.

32. Ibid., 59–60.

33. Ibid., 60.

34. Evdokimov, *Sacrament of Love*, 155.

35. Service of Holy Matrimony, in *Sacraments and Services*, 65.

36. Ibid.

37. Evdokimov, *Sacrament of Love*, 158.

38. Service of Holy Matrimony, in *Sacraments and Services*, 70.

Chapter 8

Holy Unction: The Mystery of Divine Healing

1. Service of Holy Unction, in *Sacraments and Services*, 89–90.

2. Ibid., 118.

3. Ibid., 119.

4. Ibid., 144.

5. Ibid., 119.

6. Ibid., 99.

7. Service of Holy Unction, in *Molitfelnic*, 116. [This hymn is not included in the Greek service of the Holy Unction. – trans.]

8. A. S. Khomiakov, "Essay on the Church," in *Russia and the English Church during the Last Fifty Years*, vol. 1, ed. W. J. Birbeck (London, 1895), 216.